

# Rivalry and Desire: Male-Male Relations in Ovid's *Amores* and French Feminist Theory

Emily Dawn Bunner

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Approved by:

Advisor: Professor Eric Downing

Reader: Professor Sharon James

Reader: Professor E. Jane Burns

## ABSTRACT

EMILY BUNNER: Rivalry and Desire: Male-Male Relations in Ovid's *Amores* and French Feminist Theory  
(Under the direction of Eric Downing)

This thesis examines the role of male-male rivalry within Ovid's *Amores* by using French feminist theory to interpret how the exchange of women, among men, characterizes the *amator's* relations to the *puella*, his rivals, and his poetry. The *amator's* focus on the actions and attitudes of his rivals reveals the mediating function of the *puella*, who is valued for her ability to create relations between men and to allow men to maintain these relations through contact with her body. This rivalry is also important at the metatextual level: just as the *amator* desires the *puella* because she has been made valuable by the desire of other men, the themes he borrows from epic poetry are valuable because they belong to and are valued by other authors. Both the *puella* and the text are products of male desire that is structured by the *amator's* interaction with his rivals.

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## CHAPTER 1:

### Feminist Theory and Elegiac Rivalry

Ovid's *Amores* provide many opportunities for examining the role of the desired woman in her relation to the *amator*, to the status of elegy among contemporary Roman genres, and to the sexual economy of the *amator*'s society. The *puella* is an object of desire, violence, and artistic opportunity. She is given many instructions and entreated with many pleas, but her own access to language is limited. The *amator* increasingly distances her from the action of the poems: she is of less interest than his own desire. In 2.19 he begins to shift his focus from the *puella* to the male actors in his relationships. The *puella* loses specificity as an individual woman, as she becomes a medium for interactions between the *amator* and his rivals, and a measurement of value exchanged among them. The *amator* makes it clear that male rivals are not only significant actors in his relationship with the *puella*, but required participants without whom his interest in her would dissolve. This dynamic is nowhere more clear than in the final line of 2.19 - *me tibi rivalem si iuuat esse, veta*<sup>1</sup> - in which the *amator* gives instructions to his rival for proper participation in their triangular relationship.

The elegiac *puellae* share many features in common with the poems in which they appear: both creations are motivated by a desire to elevate the poet's standing among

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<sup>1</sup> *Am.* 2.19. 60: If you want me to be your rival, forbid it.

men<sup>2</sup>. The *Amores* often display awareness of the poetic rivalry between authors, and especially between the writers of elegy and epic. When the poet borrows from the conventions of epic and tragedy, he is motivated by a desire to use what has been valued, possessed, and appropriated by other men. Careful study of the *amator's* frequent emphasis on male-male relations will give us new options for evaluating the role of rivalry in the creation of elegy and the women described within it.

The work of French post-structuralist feminism provides models of patriarchal economies of desire that can enhance our understanding of the erotic economy of the *Amores* by historically sensitive comparison. The *amator's* network of male-male relations can be fruitfully interrogated in connection to what Luce Irigaray calls "the exchange of women" (170). Irigaray, modifying Lévi-Strauss, affirms that patriarchal culture relies upon the circulation of women among men to support its social order. She makes explicit the consequence that the value of an exchanged woman, and especially of a prostitute, is determined by comparison against the external standard of her use within male activity (176). Likewise, the *puellae* in the *Amores* and the works of Propertius and Tibullus become more valuable as men make use of them (e.g., *Am.* 3.11.19-20). In this sexual economy, a woman's commodity value becomes her identity: Corinna is presented to the audience as the woman desired by the *amator*, and her characteristics are examined in ways that reflect his desire (e.g., *Am.* 1.5.23-24). The resulting transparency of the female object forces attention back onto the male exchangers. What is the nature of their relationship? According to Irigaray, the exclusive existence of transactions "among men and men alone" necessitates that "the very possibility of a sociocultural order requires

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<sup>2</sup> See Wyke 2003: 46-68 for a discussion of the similarities between the elegiac *puella* (here Cynthia) as a flesh-and-blood woman and as a textual construct representative of the writing process.

homosexuality as its organizing principle" (192).

Irigaray's use of "*homosexualité*" refers to a social relation that does not usually involve intercourse. In her reading of Irigaray, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests the limitations posed by this definition: "the expensiveness of Irigaray's vision of male homosexuality is, oddly, in a sacrifice of sex itself: the male 'homosexuality' discussed here turns out to represent anything but actual sex between men" (26). Intercourse between male partners is certainly not absent from elegy, as evidenced by Tibullus' elegies on Marathus (1.5, 8, 9), but it does not occur in the *Amores*. Ovid's *amator* is aligned more closely with Irigaray's theorization of men whose homosexual economy excludes male-male intercourse. Sedgwick's work on relations between men also supplies a helpful vocabulary for analysis that does not imply genital relations: she argues for use of the term "homosocial" to represent the complex spectrum of interactions between men.

Both Sedgwick and Irigaray present arguments for the recognition of woman's place as an exchanged commodity (in reference to Marx), and as a tool for strengthening male bonds (in reference to Lévi-Strauss), whether social, political, religious, or economic. Important work in this field has also been done by Gayle Rubin, whose essay "Traffic in Women," argues for the existence of a male homosocial economy that governs the exchange of women. Rubin remarks, "if it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them who are linked, the woman being a conduit of the relationship rather than a partner to it" (174). These theorists create a feminist critique of a patriarchal economy in which frequently overlooked male-male relations exist behind the movement of female bodies through society. A study of these relations is required to



understand the place of the transacted *puella* within the sexual economy of the *Amores* and her function as a mirror of male desire.

Irigaray's consecutive essays "Women on the Market" and "Commodities Among Themselves," published in *This Sex which is not One* (*Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, 1977), outline her conceptualization of culture as driven by exclusively male desire. She opens her investigation with the thesis of Lévi-Strauss' *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (*Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*, 1949): "The society we know, our own culture, is based upon the exchange of women" (170). Irigaray does not contest this claim; she is concerned instead with the consequences and motivations implied in Lévi-Strauss' work. What would happen if this rule was violated? How are women exchanged, that is, passed from the control of one man to another, and what makes their exchange necessary? Irigaray contends that the existence of a traffic in women does not tell us enough about the exchanged participants, and that without an understanding of the motivations behind this arrangement, Lévi-Strauss' anthropological study remains incomplete.

Irigaray's idealistic and loosely defined objective in these essays is to suggest the possibilities for the exchanged goods (women) to create meaningful transactions among themselves in a male-male market. Her intent is to expose the mechanisms of social order that have maintained the exchange of feminine objects as a requirement for culture. Her discussion of the exchange of prostitutes is especially important for an analysis of *Amores*. None of the *puellae* pursued by the *amator* is either married or marriageable.<sup>3</sup> As high-class courtesans, their position in society is openly mercantile. According to Irigaray, such women are valuable because they enable relations between many men

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<sup>3</sup> See James 2003:42-49 on the generic necessity of the *puella*'s nonmarital status.

(186).

Irigaray interprets a patriarchal culture as one in which "man begets man in his own likeness, and wives, daughters, and sisters have value only in that they serve the possibility of, and the potential benefit in, relations among men" (171-2). If a woman's value is the sum total of her potential for providing benefits for men, then her identity is itself a question of male needs. The body of the prostitute, in particular, is valuable because it is "useful" to men, and this usefulness is exchangeable between them. When the *amator* advertises his pleasure in a *puella* (e.g., 1.5), he is presenting her usefulness to other men who may also desire her ability to please them. The value of a woman is frequently relative to the desires of a man, to an ideal created by male dominated society, and to a measure of commercial exchange. Irigaray insists that "the value of a woman always escapes: black continent, hole in the symbolic, breach in discourse" (176). By herself, woman has no value in culture: she can be understood only in relation to other, externally imposed, terms.

The reality of "woman" as an empty term that acquires meaning from male-male exchange leads Irigaray to examine women in light of the Marxist concept of commodities (176). A commodity is an object with both use value and exchange value. The use value of a woman is her ability to cement male relations and maintain certain biologically or economically productive roles (childbearing, housework, prostitution, etc.) for the support of male subjects. Her exchange value is based upon her capacity to bring men into contact with other men. For a prostitute, her body has "usage that is exchanged" (186). Her value lies not in her potential for use, but in that she has already been used. In 3.4, the *amator* desires the *puella*, despite the obstacles in his way, because

she is being used by another man. The *vir* is not only another man who desires her, but a man who makes use of her, and thereby establishes her as a useful object.

The centrality of contact between men in the sociocultural order causes Irigaray to posit the existence of a "hom(m)o-sexual" economy (171). Irigaray's term, "hom(m)o-sexualité," plays on the word for "man," and emphasizes the necessary maleness of this construction. She distinguishes male-male homosexuality from same sex relations that might occur between women (and possibly between other sexes). The hom(m)o-sexual economy is characterized not by its restriction to same-sex interaction, but by specifically male-male interaction. The desire between men in a hom(m)o-sexual relation may exist in many forms outside of genital sexuality. Irigaray claims that the male-male nature of economic exchange requires "the institution of the reign of hom(m)o-sexuality. Not in an 'immediate' practice, but in its 'social' mediation" (171). The *amator*'s visualization of the physical contact between the *vir* and the *puella* in 1.4 demonstrates this distinction. The lover is intensely invested in regulating the rivalry between himself and the *vir*, and allows a fantasy about this rivalry to arouse his interest. He willingly imagines the *vir* kissing the *puella*, but certainly expresses no desire for the *vir* himself.

The women in a hom(m)o-sexual economy lack immanent value. They are "a mirror of value of and for man," as they take on meaning only in terms of benefits they can provide for men (177). Irigaray argues that "woman has value on the market by virtue of one single quality: that of being a product of man's 'labor'" (175). The *puellae* in elegy, as well as the elegies themselves, are male creations that derive value from the willingness of other men to invest interest in them or to contend for ownership of them and the value they represent. A product of any labor is also a repository of the value of

that labor, making a woman's worth dependent on her expression of male investment. Male labor is the "external standard" by which the commodity value of a woman is judged. In *Am.* 1.4, and 3.4, for example, the *puella* is valuable because another man has labored to possess her. Irigaray emphasized the resulting interchangeability of individual women as "crystals of that common social substance" that represents the money, power, recognition or other benefit they can provide to their exchangers (175). In 3.4, the potential for deriving benefit from a woman who is desired by other men is made explicit: if the *vir* will share his *puella* with rivals, many gifts will come into his household (3.4.43-48). Male desire for women in the *Amores* is essentially narcissistic in that no internal value is apparent in the desired object, but only her potential to enable the lover's self-gratification. The *amator* desires the male-male benefits that intercourse with a woman might bring him. Peaceful relationships between one woman and one man are of limited interest in elegy: *Amores* 1.5 stands out as a rare instance of sexual contentment between the *amator* and Corinna alone, and it is comparatively brief. Male-female relations have no benefit in themselves (especially in elegy, where no one desires to have children) except as a conduit for hom(m)o-sexual relations, a position exemplified by the courtesan, who functions as a social hub for creating rivalries in the *Amores*.

Irigaray contends that women have largely accepted their role as mediators for male connections, further ensuring that male-female relations remain narcissistic male-male relations. The body of the woman is socially valued and acts as a "mimetic expression of masculine values," which bear little similarity to what Irigaray problematically calls feminine "nature" (180). A woman cannot have any commerce with

men as a female subject; therefore, in any transaction involving a male subject, the woman-as-subject disappears. The *amator* presents several situations in which female subjectivity reemerges as an inconvenience: when she writes "no" on his tablets (1.7), dyes her hair (1.14), and has an abortion (2.13-14). His sorrow and anger over these appearances of female agency suggest that she has attempted to occupy a place where she is unwelcome or disruptive. Female subjectivity and lack of cooperation disrupt this trajectory and are criticized even when tolerated.

Socially constructed Woman is, to Irigaray, "the 'form' of the needs/desires of man" (182). What a man desires in a female sexual partner is determined by the masculine status that her contact will confer upon him. Irigaray relates this status to the Lacanian Phallus,<sup>4</sup> which she claims can be circulated through physical relations with women. Women can be exchanged for "their current price in gold, or phalluses," by which she suggests that a man may pursue in woman a measure of status in relation to a masculine ideal of power, in addition to relationships with individual men (175).

The *puella's* relationship to elegiac composition appears when we consider the ability of poetry to create or affirm relative male statuses. Elegy's value depends significantly upon its ability to serve the reputation of the poet. The poet recognizes the desires of other men when he borrows their vocabulary or thematic material. The *arma* in 1.1.1 belong to Virgil and are therefore valuable to the *amator* on account of their possession by a successful poet from a competing genre. Exchanged objects effectively reflect (male) value "inasmuch as, in exchanges, they are the manifestation and the circulation of the power of the Phallus, establishing the relationships of men with

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<sup>4</sup> The Phallus is an unattainable ideal of male power. According to Rubin, it is "a set of meanings conferred upon the penis," which can be gained, lost, exchanged, and contested (190).

each other" (183).

The body of the prostitute is openly exchanged among men and acts as a visible sign of a valuable acquisition. Irigaray notes that these women exist in "exchange relationships — always rivalrous — among men alone" (184). Women are useful for attaining power among men, and are desired based on the power of male labor reflected in them. The *puella* becomes more desirable as the *amator* expends more labor promoting her in his poetry, which itself becomes more desirable as it participates in rivalries with other male-authored genres. The *amator*'s desire for the *puella*, as a woman and as a figure of elegy, increases her desirability to other men (*Am.* 3.11.19-20).

Sedgwick's evaluation of "male homosocial desire" discusses the position of a woman whose desirability is determined by men's interest in her. Sedgwick shares with Irigaray an interest in the male "traffic in women," in which women are socially constituted as the reflection of male desire. Sedgwick finds Irigaray's term *hom(m)o-sexualité* problematic, because of the uncertain relevancy of male-male eroticism, which is a concern for an analysis of the *Amores*. Sedgwick uses the term "homosocial" to denote the range of male-male relations, from "men loving men" in an erotic context, to "men promoting the interests of men" in nonsexual relationships (3). She is very careful to note that this continuum is sharply divided in many cultures, which forbids a smooth transition from one end to the other. Many fora of close male interactions may be excellent examples of "men promoting the interests of men," but they may also be actively opposed to the category of "men loving men." The relationship between the *amator* and the *vir* in 3.4, for example, proposes an arrangement for mutual male benefit regarding an erotic activity, but does not suggest any intimacy between the men, who are

openly hostile toward one another. Ovid never creates a possibility for erotic contact between rivals. Sedgwick's concern with the tension between men in relation to other men leads her to a discussion of rivalry that shares many similarities with Irigaray's reading of the hom(m)o-sexual economy.

When Sedgwick writes of desire between men, she is referring to the psychoanalytic libido "not for a particular affective state or emotion, but for the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotionally charged, that shapes an important relationship"(2). Desire is a complex social drive that may be elicited by the possibility of an enjoyable outcome, or a negative reaction against a threat or injury.<sup>5</sup> Desire that appears to be invested in a woman may arise in response to her ability to reflect positive male qualities and phallic power, and it may also be the result of contest with another man who stands in the way of her attainment. *Amores* 2.19 demonstrates the desire generated by a contest with a rival: the *amator* cannot desire the *puella* if she is easily attainable. Homosocial desire can exist within bonds of rivalry, in which a woman is found desirable specifically because another man has already desired her. In this case we can recognize the transparency of the female object as the man's desire connects him directly to his rival: I desire because he desires.

Sedgwick examines the idea of rivalry by rereading René Girard's model of erotic triangles, as presented in his book, *Desire, Deceit, and the Novel (Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque, 1966)*. Girard argued for a systematization of erotic relationships such that every desire was inspired by a "mediator." A mediator can be "external" to the subject, in the form of a distant role model with whom the subject could or would never

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<sup>5</sup> The emotional state of "love" is not discussed in this context by either Sedgwick or Irigaray.

have contact, or "internal," in the form of an active rival with whom the subject has personal contact (Girard 9). For the sake of this paper, the most important part of Girard's work is his observation that desire does not necessarily originate from the object itself: "When the 'nature' of the object inspiring the passion is not sufficient to account for the desire, one must turn to the impassioned subject" (2). Since the male-male economy denies the exchanged commodity any expression of subjectivity, as Irigaray explores, we cannot account for male-female desire in the object alone. The *amator* directly supports this claim in 2.19 when he informs the *vir* that he will no longer be able to desire the *puella* if his rival does not participate in their relationship (51-52).

Girard suggests that this desire is imitative, rather than "spontaneously" experienced (5). According to his model, the *amator*'s desire for the *puella* is an imitation of the *vir*'s desire for her. Similarly, the *amator*'s desire to subvert epic themes (as, for example, in 1.9) is imitated from the desire of other men to compose epic poetry. The subject, the object, and the mediator are connected by the legs of a triangle, each of which is crucial to maintaining the desire of the subject. While there are various kinds of mediators, the most common third party is a rival for the possession of the object. Most triangles involve a pair of men who are in contest over a woman, but as Sedgwick points out, Girard fails to take into account the power differentials of gender within the triangle (Sedgwick 22-3).

Sedgwick's reading of Girard is summed up by the claim that "in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are



experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent" (Sedgwick 21).<sup>6</sup>

Girard's theory, and the *amator's* actions in 1.9 and 2.19, demonstrate that the qualities of the chosen object are often not themselves determinant of the subject's desire. The *puella* is a desirable choice because she has already been chosen by a rival, and because, as a *docta puella*, she reflects the *amator's* image of himself as a skilled writer back to him.<sup>7</sup> The reinterpretation of epic themes is desirable because those themes have been chosen and valued by other men, and their incorporation proves the skill of the writer.

Both Girard and Sedgwick elaborate their theory by using examples from European fiction that have an overwhelming tendency to articulate the bonds between male rivals more strongly than the bond between a man and a desired woman. A man's attraction to a woman appears to center on her physical beauty, but what distinguishes her from the other potentially available women (and in the case of elegiac composition, other available themes) is the regard of rivals for her. The male desire manifest in her directs the actions and choices of the *amator* — the obstacles he creates, the methods of his courtship, his likelihood to use violence (21).

Like Irigaray, Sedgwick recognizes the primacy of male-male relations in a society where the uneven distribution of power between the sexes makes equal sexual commerce between them impossible. Sedgwick seeks an explanation for the seeming inevitability of male control over the exchange of women in Lacan's rereading of Freud. She finds Lacan useful insofar as he "creates a space in which anatomic sex and cultural gender may be distinguished from one another and in which the different paths of *men's*

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<sup>6</sup> Unlike Irigaray and Sedgwick, Girard does discuss romantic "love" as an important emotional condition.

<sup>7</sup> See James 2003: 21-23 on the necessity that the *puella* have literary training and be able appreciate the poet's skill.

relations to male power might be explored" (24). Rivalry is a potent expression of a man's relation to male power, in that control/exchange of a female object grants him access to various privileges and benefits within the male-male economy, exemplified in the *Amores* by the gifts given to the *vir* at the end of 3.4. Sedgwick shares Irigaray's appreciation for Lacan's concept of the Phallus, the functional power within a patriarchal society. For Sedgwick, the inequality of phallic power within the erotic triangle causes the comparative weakness of the subject's bonds to the desired woman. In 2.19, there is inadequate male involvement in the acquisition of the *puella*. She alone, without a *vir* or male rival for the *amator*, cannot grant any status in the erotic economy of elegy. The acquisition of male power cannot be based upon contact with a woman alone, for she cannot confer the phallus. Therefore "power relationships between men and women appear to be dependent on the power relationships between men and men" (Sedgwick 25). In Sedgwick's model, the position of a woman in a patriarchal society cannot be analyzed without attention to the bonds between the men who exercise power over her.

The exchange of women depends upon male access to this phallic power, according to Rubin. Phallic status passes between men and groups of men in a way that mirrors the exchange of women. Rubin presents this Lacanian concept as a primary differentiating feature between male and female access to subjectivity in patriarchal society: "As long as men have rights in women which women do not have in themselves, the phallus also carries the meaning of the difference between 'exchanger' and 'exchanged', gift and giver" (191). Rubin explicitly links the social exchange in women to the Oedipal triangle. Her discussion follows Irigaray's earlier claim that women can be exchanged for "their current price in... phalluses" (Irigaray 175). If a man was in equal

commerce with a woman, he would be unable to retain the phallus, which "passes through women and settles upon men" (192). The *puella's* inability to pass on the phallus necessitates the *vir's* participation in order to make relations with the *puella* socially meaningful. Women in patriarchal societies are caught in an "Oedipal crisis of culture" (198). They are unable to give or acquire women because they lack the symbolic male power. Instead they act as conduits through which male power negotiations are transacted.

The path to attaining and keeping phallic power is contentious. Irigaray, Sedgwick, and Rubin each find parallels between the attainment of power in a male-male economy and the oedipal struggle wherein the male child receives the phallus from his father through a conflicting and rivalrous relationship. Rivalry, according to Freud, is necessary to ensure adult heterosexuality and break from the homosexual desire to identify the father figure as the love object (8). Toril Moi, in her article "Jealousy and Sexual Difference," summarizes this point: "The little boy has to identify with the father... at the same time as he has to cope with his deep feelings of aggression towards him. There is thus a conflict between his identification-love for his father and his rivalry with him" (59). The rivalry that begins in this oedipal triangle is reflected in patriarchal woman-exchanging relationships where men must compete with one another, and in response to one another's desires, as in *Am.* 2.19, in order to maintain their standing in the male-male economy.

The oedipal model, according to Moi, also gives an explanation for the jealousy that drives rivalrous relationships. She interprets Freud's essay, "Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality," to explain the workings of

jealousy in rivalrous exchange relationships: "This development (renunciation of identification with the mother) leaves the boy with a strong impression of suffering and anxiety experienced in rivalry with the powerful, adult father. This, then, is the oedipal background for masculine jealousy" (60). This jealousy is crucial to maintaining heterosexuality, because continued identification with the mother might lead him to take on a feminine role and develop erotic desire for other men.<sup>8</sup> Patriarchal culture, while built upon homosocial desire, punishes men who entirely withdraw from the exchange of women.

A man who is exceptionally jealous may really be expressing a greater desire for men. Freud, interpreted by Moi, contends that in the most severe cases of jealousy, "the man has to employ a considerable amount of libidinal energy in order to maintain defense-mechanisms against his repressed homosexual tendencies" (62). The result of severe jealousy is often violence. Just as the jealous boy cannot lash out against his father, the jealous man is less likely to confront his rival because of the possibility of loss of phallic status that could result from the confrontation. The jealous man's identification with the desire of his rival creates a strong male-male bond that encourages him to project his aggression onto the exchanged female. Thus, in 2.5, Ovid's *amator* is upset with his *puella* over the emergence of a new rival at a party. He admits the amorous skill of the rival, and instead blames the *puella*, desiring to tear her hair and scratch her face (45-6).

The woman, Moi claims, is irreconcilably Other to the rivalrous men, and her violation, punishment, or murder allows the man responsible to assume complete

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<sup>8</sup> Freud's historically specific idea of homosexuality does not capture the multiple possibilities for homoeroticism in men who still participate in the exchange of women.

ownership of her. The elegiac *amatores*' actions against the women in the poetry of Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius do not entail extreme physical violence; the actions they threaten to take could, however, result in serious harm, as in the case of Propertius' *amator*'s publication of slander against Cynthia in 2.5. All three poets advocate mild violence, such as tearing garments (Tib. 1.10, Prop. 2.15, *Am.* 1.5) as a means of keeping a woman under their control. When driven to violence by his jealousy, the lover tends to direct his anger against the *puella*, whether he expresses it by slander, threats, torn garments, or pulled hair. A woman who has been unfaithful is taken from the rival and fully claimed by the one who asserts this power over her.

The *amator*'s literary *materia*, typically coded female, is also claimed by a kind of poetic violence. Ovid's *amator* does not attack the authors of epic, but uses their elevated themes to describe the *levis* affairs of elegy. In 1.9, he equates the quality that makes a man a brave soldier with the quality a pretty girl seeks in a man with whom she has sex (5-7). When *amator* uses the language of military fortitude to describe the erotic stamina of a lover beating on his girlfriend's door, he asserts power over the *materia* made valuable by another man's labor. By subverting the themes taken from Virgil and Homer, Ovid makes them into his own property.

The reclamation of the exchanged woman through violence further underscores her status as the property of male subjects (socially if not legally). This is especially true of the *puella*, whose financial stability is dependent upon the generosity of her lovers. She is again unable to create meaningful commerce with men because of her symbolic lack of phallic subjectivity. Moi notes that "the interaction in this triangle formed by the jealous man, the woman, and the male rival certainly corresponds closely to Luce

Irigaray's contention that all sexual relationships are homosexual, in that they take place among men only" (64). Moi's reading of Irigaray emphasizes the importance of this woman-exchange for men "to express their mutual love," and agrees that the homosexual economy governs the male jealous triangle as well.

### **Previous Work on Jealousy and Rivalry in Roman Elegy**

Moi's essay begins with the observation that studies on jealousy are surprisingly rare. She observes, "It is striking that such a fascinating phenomenon has not given rise to a plethora of learned investigations. During the past few decades, jealous feelings have become hopelessly unfashionable, and this is probably the reason for the conspicuous absence of recent research on the subject" (53). One major investigation of jealousy found in Latin elegy is presented by Ruth Caston in her dissertation, *Elegiac Passion: A Study of Jealousy in Roman Love Elegy*. This study is primarily concerned with the work of Catullus and Propertius and approaches the issue of jealousy as part of a larger interest in *pathe* and the classical formulations and experience of emotions. Jealousy and the closely related concepts of envy and rivalry, however, have long been recognized as prominent staple themes within elegy. Thomas Dickson's 1964 article, "Borrowed Themes in Ovid's *Amores*," remarks on the conventional necessity of various kinds of rivals and the *amator's* jealous reactions to them. These characters, familiar from Roman comedy, include "the wealthy rival of the poet-lover" and the "*coniunx*, a somewhat shadowy figure, whose exact status in the girl's life and home are undetermined" (176-7). Dickson also indicates the importance of the *lena's* role in exacerbating the jealousy of

the *amator*, and in keeping him and his rival in fierce contest with one another (176).

Dickson takes an interesting stance in considering every *coniunx* or *vir* in the *Amores* to be the same man (e.g., those in 2.19 and 3.4), and all wealthy rivals who approach the *amator's puella* (whom he always calls Corinna), to be the same soldier (e.g., 2.11 and 3.8). This study oversimplifies the network of male relations in which the *amator* conducts his amorous business, but shows the importance of rivalry and jealousy in the elegiac corpus.

Caston's dissertation includes a thorough search for signal words and constructions that indicate jealousy in elegy (e.g., *laedere*, *invidia*). She focuses on the *amator* and his emotional reactions to the rival, rather than on the bond between the two rivals. Caston, like Moi, recognizes general distinctions between the expressions of male and female jealousy and briefly mentions the possibility of examining jealousy in the context of homoerotic desire (63). She chooses to analyze the instances of erotic jealousy ("the response to the loss of the beloved to a third party") in relation to the contemporary philosophies on love written by Cicero and Lucretius, and with regard to modern psychological models of coping with grief. According to Caston, the publication of poetry that presents situations of jealous and envious turmoil is beneficial because of the ability of poetry to heal and soothe the mind (19). Her appraisal of jealousy is based on explicit manifestations, rather than theoretical speculations on the *amator's* impulses (65). Caston recognizes the paradoxical nature of the elegiac relationship insofar as the lovers seem both to pursue love (which she considers marital love) and embrace antagonism (18). She does not, however, consider the advantages rivalry might bring to the *amator*, and instead contends that the lover accepts the rivalry because he cannot admit the truth

(138). She believes that Ovid's *amator* in particular is fearful that forbidding a rival might encourage further interaction with him; therefore, the *amator* must keep silent in hopes that she will lose interest in the rival (146).

Caroline Perkin's article "Protest and Paradox in Ovid, *Amores* 3.11" claims that the *amator* actually embraces jealous rivalry as a necessity for elegiac love. He does not simply put up with it, but encourages it. Perkins contends, "[the *amator*] acknowledges that erotic interest and erotic poetry are better inspired by the more unhappy aspects of the love relationship" (118). The cultivation of such obstacles as rivalries is Ovid's "erotic program" in the *Amores*. She observes that "obstacles... engage and sustain a lover's interest," and that "the presence of a rival has also increased sexual excitement" (121-22). Perkins casts the *puella* herself as an adversary of the *amator*, and she examines the apparent paradox wherein the *amator* encourages rivalry, but then jealously blames and attacks the *puella* when such rivalry is encountered. In the *Amores*, "jealousy is necessary for erotic interest," and the *amator* directly appeals to other men, whose rivalry will make the *puella* more desirable to him. Unlike Caston, Perkin's argument is based on the *amator*'s active desire for rivals. The *amator* has a "need to publicize his mistress' charms and to make her more accessible to others" (123). Perkins draws this conclusion from the reversal in 3.11b, when the *amator* decides that he will continue to pursue love in spite of the obstacles he has been lamenting. His sexual interest in the *puella* is refreshed by his indulgence in lament: the description of his sufferings has become "verbal foreplay" for renewed desire (125). Perkins stresses that Ovid's *amator*, unlike those of the other elegiac poets, "recalls the unhappy aspects of his relationship in order to leave it, in his reality, these are the happy times of his relationship which cause



him to stay with it" (125). Perkins includes no discussion of the *amator's* relation to his rivals or the motivating factors behind this need for rivalry, but makes a firm case for his intentional pursuit of the involvement of other men in order to create obstacles in his relationship to the *puella*.

Perkins' argument for the intentional pursuit of rivals is shared by Ellen Greene in her articles "Sexual Politics in Ovid's *Amores*: 3.4, 3.8, and 3.12" and "Travesties of Love: Violence and Voyeurism in Ovid *Amores* 1.7." Greene points out the *amator's* insistence that "the presence of rivals or, for that matter, obstacles in general, only increases the thrill of amatory pursuit and fuels his creative imagination as well" ("Sexual Politics" 349). Greene highlights the brutality against women that is often the effect of jealousy. She agrees with Moi's claim that jealous violence tends to be directed towards women due to their status as male property (Moi 64). Greene feels that this dynamic is exaggerated in the *Amores*, because Ovid is using the *amator's* conduct in love as a paradigm for the actions of men in the political and social spheres of Rome. She claims that "Ovid criticizes a social and political system that promotes aggression, conquest, and exploitation of others — especially women (345). By showing the consequences of this domination over women, Ovid hopes to cause his audience to question this conduct, and by analogy, the corrupt sociopolitical situation as well. The particular relevance of Greene's work to this paper is her reliance on Irigaray's interpretation of the theory that society is based upon the exchange of women among men, as presented in *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Greene finds this system clearly illustrated in *Amores* 2.19 and 3.4, when "Ovid's *amator* tries to 'make deals' with the *maritus* of his mistress to manipulate how she will be used as an object of the *amator's* pleasure" (346). She sees Ovid

critiquing this "mercantilist" approach to love, in which a woman is most desirable when she is most fully exploited. The *Amores* clearly show the profit that the *amator* gains from "pimping" his *puella*, and that "her marketability is closely linked to the arousal of male sexual desire (349). Greene feels that openly showing this economically exploitative side of love is an attempt to subvert the elegiac genre. While Greene does not speculate on the relation between the male exchangers, she does note that the primary function of the *puella* is to be marketable (*vendibilis*) between men.

Greene continues this project in her later article, in which she claims that Ovid "presents amatory arrangements as transactions that consolidate masculine authority and privilege" ("Violence and Voyeurism" 409). This article also relies on the theories of Irigaray to make a case for the commodification of the *puella*. Sara Myers' survey article, "The Metamorphosis of a Poet," notes the increasing numbers of recent studies that fruitfully explore Ovid's work by using feminist theories of exploitation. She shows the tendency to use Ovidian texts to examine "the symbolic function of women as sites of violence and violation" (200). Myers's observations encompass articles like Greene's that claim that Ovid critiques Roman society by means of subverting amatory genres. She writes, "Feminist and Gender studies have revealed the interdependence between Roman constructions of sexuality and Roman articulations of a social hierarchy" (201). She emphasizes general trends to reexamine the credulity of the *amator's* subservient pose in relation to the elegiac mistress, and to recognize imperial rhetoric used to define the position of women in elegy.

According to Myers, the application of feminist theory to Classical studies is slow in progress and often resisted, but more articles are appearing that successfully prove the

applicability of such critical theory to the elegiac corpus. Feminist theory is becoming more acceptable as a means of examining elegiac concerns beyond calling attention to neglected female characters. Paul Miller's article on poetic gender inversion, "Why Propertius is a Woman: French Feminism and Augustan Elegy,"<sup>9</sup> for example, employs theories from Irigaray to claim that "The Propertian subject position... closely approximates that of Woman as defined by post-Lacanian feminists" (128). Feminist concerns are also becoming more prominent in non-theoretical articles that attempt to reevaluate the position of women within the text. Nicolas Gross' article, "*Amores* 1.8: Whose Amatory Rhetoric?" demonstrates this concern by examining the role of the *lena* as the *amator's* "rhetorical match," who attempts to subvert the system of male exchange by controlling the *amator's* passions in a way that will increase her profits (202, 205). While Gross does not rely on literary theory to make his argument, the *lena's* appropriation of the lover's role "to extract for gifts or money from him" is congruous with French Feminist thought (205).

This paper will build on the French feminist model of a homosexual economy, as explored by Irigaray and Rubin, and on the triangular model of rivalry, found in Sedgwick, Moi, and Girard. Close attention to the sexual economy of rivalry and jealousy in the *Amores* will enable us to understand the place of the *puellae* in relation to the *amator*, and the motivation of the actions taken against her and on her account. The women of the *Amores* are the product of projected male desire, and this desire is in turn structured by the *amator's* homosocial interaction with his rivals, friends, and male audience.

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<sup>9</sup> This article became the basis for Miller's chapter "Why Propertius Is a Woman," in *Subjecting Verses : Latin Love Elegy and the Emergence of the Real*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2004.

## CHAPTER 2:

### Male Rivalry in Tibullus and Propertius

Ovid's attention to the actions and desires of his rivals illustrates a shift in the focus of his elegiac corpus that distinguishes it from the earlier work of Tibullus and Propertius. Both his predecessors refer to and react against their rivals, but their primary point of attention remains the relationship between themselves and the *puella*, while the rivals appear as generic stock characters familiar from Roman comedy. Ovid's expansion of the relationship, which causes the rival to become a prominent participant in a triangular set of interactions, reveals a dynamic that is present but never directly articulated in the elegies of Tibullus and Propertius. For the earlier elegists, the rivals appear as *viri*, men who have a steady relationship with the *puellae* and about whom little is said, and as wealthy competitors, usually soldiers or freedmen, whom the poets degrade as unworthy. This second kind of rival, the *dives amator*, is used as a prop to enable the lover to show his rejection of wealth and to defend his choice to pursue a career outside of politics. The *dives amator* and the soldier (*miles*) also frequently serve as representations of qualities valued in epic poetry. When the poet uses this rival to show his views about wealth, war, and epic *materia*, the rival performs the necessary function of mirroring the lover, allowing him to characterize himself in terms of opposition. The male-male relations in the works of Tibullus and Propertius become those of comparison — the poets cannot define themselves exclusively in relation to their *puellae*, but they must also assume value in relation to the other men who appear in the

cast of elegy.

As a genre so heavily focused upon complaint and lament,<sup>10</sup> elegy cannot exist without obstacles to the lover's desires. While Ovid openly acknowledges his pursuit and cultivation of these obstacles, the earlier elegists appear to resist or mourn them. The programmatic poem of Tibullus' collection expresses a strong desire for peace and contentment in the countryside, as opposed to the military setting of epic poetry, in service to his beloved Delia. He reflects that his desires are met when he is safely indoors and at her side, sheltered from the storms (1.1.45-48). Similarly, in 2.19, Propertius' speaker expresses a fond dream of secluding Cynthia in the countryside, far from the envious eyes of possible rivals. Both lovers openly seek full and exclusive possession of their *puellae*, and appear to avoid the interference of other men in their relationships. However, the necessity of rivalry to the composition of elegy occasions moments of acceptance or even invitation of obstacles. At the close of his idyllic countryside dream in 1.1, Tibullus adds: *nunc levis est tractanda uenus, dum frangere postes / non pudet et rixas inseruisse iuuat*<sup>11</sup> (73-74). These lines prepare the reader for a collection that will, with some degree of enthusiasm, partake in the competition essential to elegy. The need to break door posts and engage in disputes implies the presence of rivals, and this approach to love (*venus*) is introduced as *levis*, a signal word for elegy, suggesting that such obstacles may not be entirely undesirable after all. By incorporating violence in the service of *levis venus*, Tibullus appropriates combat from epic and shows

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<sup>10</sup> See Georg Luck's chapter "The Origin of Elegy as a Literary Form," in *The Latin Love Elegy*. N. J. : Rowman and Littlefield, 1979. For examples of lament, see *Am.* 1.12 and 3.9, *Prop* 4.7, and Tibullus 1.3.

<sup>11</sup> Lighter love must be drawn out now, while it is not shameful to break door posts and it is pleasant to have joined a dispute.

that it has a significant place in elegy.

As he approaches the end of his collection of elegies, Propertius' *amator* comments upon the poem he is about to write: *magnum iter ascendo, sed dat mihi gloria uires: / non iuuat e facili lecta corona iugo*<sup>12</sup> (4.10.3-4). This tendency to derive pleasure from difficulty appears intermittently among the lover's more common pleas for Cynthia to yield to him alone and grant him easy and peaceful access to sex. The most striking example of the *amator*'s desire for obstacles appears in 3.8, as he reflects upon a violent quarrel he had with his *puella* the previous night. He repeatedly stresses his desire for conflict throughout this elegy. To the *amator*, love must be proven by violence: *non est certa fides, quam non in iurgia vertas: / hostibus eueniat lenta puella meis*<sup>13</sup> (19-20). He admits that he desires a certain degree of unhappiness:

aut in amore dolere uolo aut audire dolentem,  
siue meas lacrimas siue uidere tuas,  
tectas superciliis si quando uerba remittis,  
aut mea cum digitis scripta silenda notas<sup>14</sup> (23-26).

He openly acknowledges the need for *dolor*, which is otherwise only implicitly confessed in his elegies. The lover does not, however, desire *dolor* to arise from conflict between himself and the *puella* alone: he reveals his wish for the participation of a rival to complete his relationship. He takes an interest in how his rivals will be involved: *in*

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<sup>12</sup> I am embarking on a great journey, but glory gives me strength. A crown taken from an easy summit does not give any pleasure.

<sup>13</sup> There is no true faith that you cannot turn into an argument: Let a girl who is slow to anger come to my enemies!

<sup>14</sup> I wish either to suffer in love or to hear you suffering, to see either my tears or yours, when you send back hidden words with your eyebrows, or you see me write with my fingers what must not be spoken.

*morso aequales uideant mea uulnera collo: / me doceat liuor mecum habuisse meam*<sup>15</sup>

(21-22). *Livor* here indicates the color of the bite marks his *puella* has given him, but the word is also used to indicate elegiac jealousy, suggesting that he may desire to arouse envy in his rival as well. The Propertian speaker departs most significantly from his earlier claims to desire a peaceful relation with Cynthia when he declares: *aut tecum aut pro te mihi cum riuilibus arma / semper erunt: in te pax mihi nulla placet*<sup>16</sup> (34-35).

According to this elegy, the lover does not desire the removal of the obstacles he so often protests. He finds conflict itself pleasurable to the point where he takes up the epic *arma* against his rivals. He wishes for struggles to occur both with his *puella* and with a rival who will provide him with the difficulties required for elegy. In order to maintain his character, he must be ever beset by griefs and trials, and in order to maintain his desire, he must be faced with challenges.

The rival is a necessary character in Roman elegy. The two most common rivals, the dull *vir* and the rich soldier, perform roles that are derived from comedy (see Dickson, 1964). The triangular relationship of a *puella*, an *amator*, and a *miles* is a commonly employed motif in both comedy and elegy. J.C. Yardley notes that the elegists use this structure, familiar from such plays as *Truculentus* and *Eunuchus*, while altering the characterization of the soldier such that he presents a more pressing threat (137). The soldiers, who are incongruous with the elegiac pursuit of love, can and do take the *puellae* from the lovers, and as Tibullus' speaker notes: *nam donis uincitur omnis amor*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Let my rivals see my wounds on my bitten neck. Let my bruise show that I have had my girlfriend with me.

<sup>16</sup> I will always be fighting, either with you or with rivals for you: I am not pleased by any peace with you.

<sup>17</sup> For all love is conquered by gifts

(1.5.60). While the soldier apparently proves no threat to the speaker's love for the *puella* (Prop. 2.24.23-24), he can physically block access to her. If the elegiac mistress is won over by a rival who can bar the lover from any form of contact with her, he is not only in danger of losing his desired object, but the *materia* for his poetry as well. When the *puella* is kept by the *miles*, the *amator's* trade is itself in danger.

The wealthy suitor provides the conflict that drives a large part of the lover's complaints. Tibullus' elegies 1.5-6 deal with the problem of a rich suitor who threatens the desires of the poet. This man is minimally characterized: he is *alter* (5.17), *dives amator* (5.47), and *nescio quem* (6.6). The details of his character are less important than the function he performs in allowing the *amator* to describe himself. This rival simply buys his desired woman, and will someday go on to buy another. The poet presents himself in contrast: *pauper erit praesto tibi semper*<sup>18</sup> (5.61). The presence of the *dives amator* allows Tibullus' speaker to become the *pauper amator* by relation, and thus to characterize himself as everything that the rival is not. The rival values money while the lover values servitude and devotion; the rival will move on, but the lover will remain: *in tenero fixus erit latere*<sup>19</sup> (63). When compared to Irigaray's contention that the bodies of women serve as "an alibi for the smooth workings of man's relations with himself, of relations among men" (172), the *amator's* focus on his rival reveals the mediating function of the *puella*. The *puella* occasions the interaction of the rich and poor suitors whose worth is determined in relation to one another rather than by their contact with the woman herself. In order to defend his choices of occupation and morals, the *amator* must justify them against the actions of another man. The *puella* is the point of connection

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<sup>18</sup> A poor man will always be there for you.

<sup>19</sup> He will stay by your tender side



between these men, as the poetic *materia* is the connection between the authors of the genres that the rivals represent.

The wealthy rivals mentioned by Propertius also lack in-depth characterization. The most prominent example of the *dives amator* appears in poems 1.8 and 2.19. This rival is described as an Illyrian praetor, and serves to represent those Roman men who follow the dominant social expectation of military service and travel, which are valorized in epic poetry. Such men constitute the population from which Propertius's *amator* is most anxious to set himself apart, and to which he continually feels a need to justify his actions. The praetor is the sort of man who would be expected to favor epic poetry and consider elegy a weaker craft. The *amator* proves the validity of his occupation when his propempticon triumphs over the riches and travel offered by the rival in 1.8. In this instance, elegy has proven triumphant:

illa uel angusta mecum requiescere lecto  
et quocumque modo maluit esse mea,  
quam sibi dotatae regnum uetus Hippodamiae,  
et quas Elis opes ante pararat equis.  
quamuis magna daret, quamuis maiora daturus  
non tamen illa meos fugit auara sinus.  
hanc ego non auro non Indis flectere conchis,  
sed potui blandi carminis obsequio<sup>20</sup> (33-40).

The *amator* proves that his narrow circumstances, indicated by his narrow bed, do not make him inferior to the wealthy praetor. He claims that material riches are not the greatest signifier of worth, because he is able to convince the *puella* to favor his company by means of *carmina*. The significance of this poem lies not only in its information about

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<sup>20</sup> She preferred to sleep with me, although my bed is narrow, and to be mine, no matter what our manner of life, than to have the old kingdom of richly endowed Hippodamia, and whatever wealth Elis obtained from horses. Although he gave large gifts, although he was about to give greater ones, she did not greedily leave my lap. I was able to persuade her, not with gold, not with Indian pearls, but by the appeal of flattering poetry.

Cynthia and her relationship with the *amator*, but in the poet's ability to defend the value of his work by ranking it against the worth of another man. The poet has caused the *puella* to be exchanged between men on the basis of their comparative worth one to another. Her place in the amorous economy remains that of "a mirror value of and for man" (Irigaray 177).

In 2.16 the praetor has finally returned from Illyria, and again presents a threat to the *amator*. This time the poet attempts to write him off by a spiteful synecdoche, essentially reducing him to a coin purse. He uses Cynthia's actions as the measurement: *Cynthia non sequitur fascis nec curat honores, / semper amatorum ponderat una sinus*<sup>21</sup> (11-12). By examining the praetor in terms of his rivalry over Cynthia, the *amator* is able to negate everything but his money. He goes on to argue that money is a great corrupter of morals, again allowing himself to appear to hold the moral high ground, despite his choice to be a writer of elegy (13-26). Finally, the *amator* neutralizes the monetary power of the praetor by reminding Cynthia that his gifts bring only fleeting benefit and that there is a great risk of divine retribution exacted against the faithless (44-56).

Cynthia's reactions to poetry, unaccompanied by other gifts, determine the extent to which the *amator* approves of her behavior. The poet's desire to court a *docta puella* also demonstrates his desire to use the *puella* as a mirror of his own worth. The *puella* fulfills for the *amator* the role of the "value-bearing form, the desire for exchange, and the reflection of his own value and that of his fellow man that man seeks in it" (Irigaray 180-1). In 2.13, Propertius' *amator* explains that a woman's physical form is not his primary pursuit, because he also desires a woman who will reaffirm to him the worth of

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<sup>21</sup> Cynthia neither pursues the *fascis*, nor cares for rank — she alone always weighs the purses of her lovers.

his work.<sup>22</sup>

non ego sum formae tantum mirator honestae,  
nec si qua illustris femina iactat auos:  
me iuuet in gremio doctae legisse puellae,  
auribus et puris scripta probasse mea.  
haec ubi contingerint, populi confusa valet  
fabula: nam domina iudice tutus ero.  
quae si forte bonas ad pacem verterit auris  
possum inimicitias tunc ego ferre Iovis<sup>23</sup> (9-16).

It is vital that the *puella* be willing to accept his elegy as payment in order to prevent the rival from winning her with his material wealth.<sup>24</sup> If the attitudes and opinions of the *puella* allow the *dives amator* to win in every rivalry, then the value of elegy itself suffers, and the poet loses his standing as a reliable *praeceptor*. The *puella* must perform this reflective role in order for the poet's place in the male-male social order to be upheld. The addition of a *dives amator* to complete this worth-affirming triangle gives elegy a widely accepted standard against which to be measured.

The rivalries necessary to elegy are to some extent desirable in the work of Tibullus and Propertius, although the *amatores* do not acknowledge the desirability as explicitly as the *amator* of Ovid's *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*. The *amator* of each poet does, however, acknowledge that he may himself be responsible for the creation of these rivalries (Tib. 1.6, *Am.* 3.12, Prop. 2.34). The interest of one man adds worth to its object in the eyes of others. In the work of Irigaray, the pursued object is not even the woman herself — the male value externally allotted to her is what makes her more desirable than

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<sup>22</sup> See James 2003: 21-23.

<sup>23</sup> I am not only an admirer of great beauty, nor of any woman who boasts about her illustrious ancestors. It delights me to have read in the lap of a learned girl, and to have my poems approved by her pure ears. When this happens, farewell to the confused nonsense of the people, for I will be safe with my mistress as my judge. If by chance she turns kind ears to peace, then I am able to bear the hostility of Jove.

<sup>24</sup> See James 2003: 98-104 on the competition between the lover-poet and a wealthy rival.

another woman: "The exchange operation cannot take place in terms of some intrinsic, immanent value of the commodity. It can only come about when two objects — two women — are in relation of equality to a third term that is neither one nor the other" (175). The woman recreated in elegy is the product of the poet's *ingenium*: she is carefully manipulated *materia* that is presented in a desirable form (made more desirable by its favorable opposition to epic *materia*). The audience of Tibullus and Propertius certainly included female readers, but their work is primarily designed to appeal to Roman men. Since the lovers are presenting an intensely desirable woman to an audience of men who are likely to have amorous interests, the publication of this poetry can threaten the exclusivity of the poet's relationship.

The poets are sometimes able to empathize with a rival who shares a common infatuation. Empathy with a *vir* or a *miles* is quite impossible: these characters must be consistently labeled as intellectually and morally inferior to the poet. The *amator* does, however, have pity for his friends and for the general body of his readers, whom he instructs with techniques for managing their love. Propertius directs elegies to Gallus and Lynceus, two friends who have become attracted to Cynthia (1.5, 2.34). While the address to Gallus in 1.5 opens harshly, with the rebuke *insane*, Propertius' speaker gradually begins to show mercy for Gallus' plight. Instead of threatening to harm him, he simply warns him of the dangers posed by a relationship with Cynthia: *non tibi iam somnos, non illa relinquet ocellos: / illa feros animis alligat una uiros*<sup>25</sup> (11-12). He predicts that this treatment by Cynthia will cause Gallus to come to him for comfort, despite their rivalry (13-17). The *amator* creates an image of the two rivals taking

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<sup>25</sup> No longer will she allow sleep or closed eyes: that one binds men by her fierce will.

comfort in their mutual torment suffered at the hands of Cynthia:

non ego tum potero solacia ferre roganti,  
cum mihi nulla mei sit medicina mali;  
sed pariter miseri socio cogemur amore  
alter in alterius mutua flere sinu<sup>26</sup> (27-30).

A rivalry characterized by the words *pariter*, *socio*, and *mutua* would suggest both the primacy of the male-male bond in the triangle, and the lack of real threat these rivals pose to one another.

In 2.34, the *amator* reacts more angrily against Lynceus, whom he refers to as an *amicus*, but refuses to accept as a *rivalis* (1, 18). The poet calls on the examples of Menelaus and Medea to show how rivalry is able to destroy close bonds, and he characterizes Lynceus' intent as *flagitium* (6-12). Once he has scolded Lynceus, he is willing to pardon his friend's *crimina*, which leads him to find a reason to rejoice in the situation: *Lynceus ipse meus seros insanit amores! / solum te nostros laetor adire deos*<sup>27</sup> (25-6). Lynceus deserves the poet's sympathy because he has assumed the position of a lover. Since Lynceus was previously a writer of epic poetry, the *amator* takes this opportunity to emphasize the desirability of elegy by spending the next sixteen couplets giving his friend advice on how he must now forsake epic and compose elegy (27-32).

Peaceful relations between friendly rivals are uncommon in elegy: even when Propertius' *amator* accepts the other man as an honorable friend, he rejects him as a rival. The jealousy felt by the poet towards the rival, however, is able to result in desire or esteem. In her work on jealousy in elegy, Ruth Caston notes that the elegiac *amator*

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<sup>26</sup> Then I will be unable to bring solace to you when you ask, since there is no treatment for my misfortune, but miserable we will be driven equally by shared love to weep, each in the bosom of the other.

<sup>27</sup> My Lynceus himself is mad with late love. I rejoice that only you now approach our gods.

sometimes develops "great fascination with the rival and even identification" (124). I noted above the ability of the Propertian speaker to identify with his rivals in regard to their mutual desire. Ovid's *Amores* will bring the theme of fascination with a rival to greater prominence, but the earlier elegists do exhibit interest in the actions of the other man. Caston claims that "Propertius reveals that perverse aspect of jealousy in which lovers torture themselves with curiosity about the infidelity, even as the information causes them pain" (95). This attention to infidelity does not stop at questioning the faithfulness of the *puella*, but extends to inquisitiveness about the rival as well.

In 3.8, I observed that Propertius' *amator* expresses a desire to fight with rivals, in order to add excitement to his relationship. In 1.3, the *amator* presents a fantasy he constructs about Cynthia as she sleeps, attributing her breathing and movement to interaction with another man in a dream. Rather than imagine that she might be thinking of him, the lover enjoys the idea of a rival attacking his beloved in sleep:

et quotiens raro duxti suspiria motu,  
 obstupui uano credulus auspicio,  
 ne qua tibi insolitos portarent visa timores,  
 neve quis invitam cogeret esse suam<sup>28</sup> (27-30).

The fear involved in this dream adds to the attractiveness of the spectacle, and the *amator's* suspicion of a desirous rival's involvement adds to the *puella's* appeal. As Caston observes, "another's attention to the beloved intensifies the lover's desire to possess her himself" (115).

Caston's argument is very much in line with Irigaray's claim that a woman, whose exchange value is always external to herself, is circulated through an economy in which her male exchangers' primary goal is to create connections with one another. The role of

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<sup>28</sup> And when at some times you sighed at some disturbance, I feared, believing a false omen, that some apparition might be bringing unaccustomed terrors to you, or forcing you against your will.

the *puellae* resembles Irigaray's model in which the exchange of women supports hom(m)osexuality, while the identification of men with other men "in more or less rivalrous appropriations" redirects sexual desire from those men onto women (172). When the *amator* intentionally pursues highly sought-after women, he is expressing a desire to maintain contact with other men through his relationships with such *puellae*. He attempts to regulate his interactions with the men he meets through their shared contact with the *puella*. While he desires the participation of other men, he is careful to ensure that this participation will not result in the removal of his elegiac *materia*. The *amator* must maintain his access to the woman at the same time that he allows or seeks rivals: his desire for a woman cannot be maintained without the interaction of other men who also desire her.

The leg of the Girard's erotic triangle that extends from the rival to the beloved is developed further in Ovid, but is also prefigured in poetry prior to elegy. For example, in Catullus 51, the lover presents a rereading of Sappho's poem in which the rivals are described as men connected by their interest in the same woman. Catullus' *amator* views his rival as a god because he is able to gaze upon the beloved without interference (1-5). This rival is not denigrated or insulted, but watched carefully and with respect. The rival's attention to the *puella* acts as solid proof of her worth both as a love object and as poetic *materia*, which by extension affirms the worth of Catullus' poetic career.

The extent of a poet's interest in his rivals is also shown by his willingness or desire to speak directly to them. We saw two situations in Propertius 1.5 and 2.34 in which the *amator* offers counsel to his friends concerning their interest in Cynthia. Ovid uses direct address more prominently, especially in *Am.* 2.19 and 3.4, as he manipulates

the terms of the rivalry he shares. Tibullus' elegies 1.5 and 1.6, in which the poet offers advice to his rival, are closely related to the later Ovidian apostrophes.<sup>29</sup> The rival in 1.5 is a *dives amator*, supposedly pressed upon Delia by a *lena*. The poet characterizes this rival as is standard for a *dives amator*: one who can buy love, but will not prove as constant or faithfully devoted as the *pauper amator* (1.5.59-66). Tibullus' *amator* admits that his words are useless in this situation, and resigns himself to defeat (67-68). Instead of reflecting on the nature of this defeat in the same voice as the preceding couplets, the *amator* addresses his conclusions to the rival:

at tu, qui potior nunc es, mea furta timeto:  
 uersatur celeri Fors leuis orbe rotae.  
 non frustra quidam iam nunc in limine perstat  
 sedulus ac crebro prospicit ac refugit  
 et simulat transire domum, mox diende recurrit  
 solus et ante ipsas exscreat usque fores<sup>30</sup> (69-74).

The *amator* points out that the situation is reversed only for the immediate present; soon the *dives amator* will be in the poet's position, because chance will send another lover.<sup>31</sup>

There is a hint of intimidation here, but also acceptance of shared circumstance. The poet and the rival have been through the same struggles and face similar future trials. The *amator* ends his poem by essentially telling the rival to enjoy it while it lasts: *nescio quid*

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<sup>29</sup> Tibullus makes a lengthy address in 1.8 to Pholoe, his female rival for the affections of the boy Marathus. This instance is quite different from the address made by a poet to another man, because of its concern for the welfare of the contested love object.

<sup>30</sup> But you, who are preferred now, must fear my theft. Slippery chance turns on the circle of her swift wheel. Not in vain, a certain man already stands attentive on the threshold, and often looks forward and retreats and pretends to pass the house and soon runs back alone, and coughs continuously before those doors.

<sup>31</sup> This situation has another parallel in Prop. 2.9.1-2: *Iste quod est, ego saepe fui: sed fors et in hora / hoc ipso eiecto carior alter erit.*



*furtiuus amor parat. utere quaeso, / dum licet: in liquida nam tibi linter aqua*<sup>32</sup> (75-6).

While 1.5 begins as an address to Delia, it ends as a veiled threat to the rival. It is not enough to plead or reason with the beloved: The poet's imagination travels irresistibly to the circumstances of the other man and his relationship with the *puella*.

The address to a *vir* in Tibullus 1.6 more closely resembles Ovid's *Am.* 2.19, in which the *amator* criticizes a *vir*'s lack of control over his *puella*. In Tibullus 1.6, Delia has tricked both her *vir* and the poet by taking on a *dives amator*. The poet is upset not only by Delia's actions, but also by the *vir*'s attitude towards this infidelity. The *amator*'s portrayal of the *vir* as lacking devotion strengthens his own case, but his attention to the *vir*'s involvement in the relationship demonstrates a greater interest in the economy of desire among the three rivals for Delia. He begins by giving general advice: the *vir* should watch her closely, notice how she dresses and with whom she speaks, and be wary of how often she goes out alone (15-22). The lover asks the *vir* to be fearful, giving instruction on how he should react to the situation (21). He realizes, however, that the feelings of the *vir* are not sufficient to achieve his desired effect, and asks instead: *at mihi credas, illam sequar unus ad aras: / tunc mihi non oculis sit timuisse meis*<sup>33</sup> (23-4). He pleads repeatedly for the *vir* to entrust the guardianship of the *puella* to him, because of his greater concern for her chastity:

quid tenera tibi coniuge opus? tua si bona nescis  
seruare, frustra clauis inest foribus.  
te tenet, absentes alios suspirat amores

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<sup>32</sup> Secret love is preparing something. I ask that you enjoy it while you can: your boat floats on flowing water.

<sup>33</sup> But if you entrust her to me, I alone will attend those altars. Then I would not fear for my eyes.

et simulat subito condoluisse caput<sup>34</sup> (33-36).

This address continues the poet's project to characterize himself in opposition to an unfeeling and unperceptive *vir*. His desire to tell the *vir* just how lacking he is in judgment demonstrates a drive to contact the rival and determine the contest with him directly, rather than trying to convince the *puella* to choose between them. This poem also serves to define the role of the *amator* within Roman male economy by presenting the character of the love poet in opposition to both the *dives amator* Delia has taken and the *vir* who keeps a mistress but does not make her the focus of his attention.

The categories of interaction with rivals that occur in Roman elegy prior to the *Amores* demonstrate the importance of rivalry to defining the character of the *amator*. The *amator's* relationship to the *puella* alone is insufficient to establish his place in the male exchange economy. The composition of elegy is a choice of profession as well as poetic form, and requires justification against the prevailing valuation of military service and travel, and the estimation of these as presented in epic poetry. In order to hold his place among other Roman men, the poet borrows the characters of the *dives amator*, the *miles*, and *vir* from Roman comedy to embody the different social roles he has rejected. While the opinion of these men can add value to the *puella* and establish her as an object worthy of the *amator's* attention, the poets also use these men as comic characters whose inferiority to the lover is clear. The poet's interaction with the *puella* becomes a vehicle for establishing his relation to these rivalrous men and to the expectations of urban culture.

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<sup>34</sup> What use is a tender "wife" to you? If you don't know how to guard your own property, the key is placed in the door in vain. She holds you, but she sighs for another absent love. And suddenly she pretends that her head aches.

## CHAPTER 3:

### Rivalry in the *Amores*

Ovid's *Amores* participate in an elegiac tradition of paying frequent attention to the rivals of the poetic speaker. Rivalry emerges clearly in 1.4 and 2.5, the dinner-party poems, and becomes especially prominent in 2.19, when the poet expresses his desire that his girlfriend be guarded more closely. In this poem, and several following poems (specifically 3.4, 3.8, 3.11, 3.12, and 3.14), the *puella* is an indistinct figure whose importance is increasingly defined by the interest other men take in her. The *amator's* direct address to the *vir* initiates an intensifying pattern that continues through Book 3, in which the *puella* becomes less important than the relations between the men with whom she is involved, and than the dynamics of their rivalry. As in the work of Tibullus and Propertius, this rivalry is played out at the metatextual level as well. Ovid's *amator* is especially interested in setting up an opposition between elegy and epic, which he frequently approaches by borrowing themes and phrases that belong to the authors of epic (e.g., 1.9, 2.1, 2.12). Like the other elegists, he introduces rivals who belong to professions that are well-regarded in epic. These rivals are characterized as inferior to the *amator*, which allows him to defend his occupation. The poetic *materia*, like the *puella*, serves to increase the *amator's* standing in relation to other Roman men.

Luce Irigaray's concept of woman as an instrument to hide male-male desire offers an effective way of interpreting the triangle formed by the *amator*, the *puella*, and a male rival (180). The function of the *puella* in this relationship can be explored in

comparison to Irigaray's presentation of the prostitute as a woman who gains additional value for men from her immediately available, repeatable, and exchangeable use. Eve Sedgwick's work on homosociality will be helpful in a discussion of the *Amores* because it applies cultural theories that she and Irigaray borrow from Lévi-Strauss and Marx to a literary model of rivalry between men, over women. Whether the *amator's* rival is a clearly defined individual such as the *miles* in 3.8, or the group of men in 3.12 who are interested in his *puella* because of his poetry about her, rivalry is a crucial part of the relationships in the *Amores*. Ovid's *amator* is much more direct than the lovers created by Tibullus and Propertius when he expresses his need for a rival in order to maintain his interest in any relationship he has with a woman. When he arrives at 3.14, the *amator* can directly address his *puella* in terms of her involvement with his rivals, because his relationship with her can never be independent of this rivalry. He does not ask her to avoid these rivals, but instead asks her to pretend to be faithful (15-16). The *amator* openly acknowledges that his position as a lover makes him a part of a homosocial network of exchange between male rivals.

The *amator's* game of love requires an extensive cast: in addition to the women he pursues, their maids, doorkeepers, and a variety of support staff, the operation of elegiac love requires various rivals for the *puella's* attention, whether they be hopeful suitors or established *viri*. He relies on the thrill of pursuit, as emphasized by his frequent use of metaphors for siege and hunting, to keep his interest in the girl. For example, in 1.9, the *amator* borrows an epic setting to explain his erotic activities in terms of a battle:

saepe soporatos inuadere profuit hostes  
 caedere et armata vulgus inerme manu.  
 sic fera Threicii ceciderunt agmina Rhesi,  
 et dominum capti deseruistis equi.

nempe maritorum somnis utuntur amantes  
et sua sopitis hostibus arma mouent<sup>35</sup> (21-26)

If he were to gain his desires easily, there would be no material for his poetry. The *puella* herself is not adequate *materia* for elegy; she must come with a complex collection of trials, deceptions, difficulties, and tests of amatory prowess.<sup>36</sup> This theme is further developed in 2.12, when the *amator* emphasizes the connection between courtship and battle by describing a number of conflicts started by male pursuit of women.

When the *amator* does acquire unobstructed access to the *puella* in 1.5, the episode is briefly described in an elegy of only 26 lines. The *puella* must be both desirable to the *amator* and desired by other men. In 2.19 and in 3.4, the *amator* gives direct instructions to his rivals, in both cases the girl's *vir*, on how to interact with other men by regulating their control of the *puellae*. The *amator* and the *vir* have unequal access to the body of the courted woman, but a relation of rivalry exists between them that is necessary to the enjoyment of both. Irigaray describes a woman desired in this way as "the reflection of [a man's] own value and that of his fellow man that man seeks in it," such that a woman's commodity value lies in her ability to show the value of men (180). Irigaray's approach to women's valuation as reflections of male character allows us to focus on the importance of the other male suitors to the *amator*'s desire.

Irigaray's important addition to Lévi-Strauss' thesis is her contention that a society built upon the exchange of women requires hom(m)osexuality as the basis of its transactions between men. Because this economy reduces woman to an object of

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<sup>35</sup> Often it has been advantageous to attack the sleeping enemy and slaughter the unarmed crowd with the armed hand. Thus the fierce troop of Thracian Rhesus fell, and you captured horses deserted your lord. Certainly lovers make use of the sleep of husbands, and move their own weapons while the enemy sleeps.

<sup>36</sup> See James 2003: 108-152 for a detailed discussion of the obstacles and complaints standard to elegy, and a reference table (111) for locating the *topoi* of elegiac complaint.

exchange whose value is determined by her reflection of male character (or, as in the *Amores*, male libido), the men who pursue and desire her are truly pursuing and desiring a male-male relationship. As I discussed in my first chapter, Irigaray's conception of homosexual relations notably excludes sexual intercourse, instead framing hom(m)osexuality as a social relation. Even a man who is sexually interested only in women is socially interested in the male relations that intercourse with a woman will bring him. The *amator* appears to joke about just this concept at the end of 3.4, when he assures the overcautious *vir* that sharing his *puella* will bring friendships with other men (46-7). The *amator*, who often conveys serious claims in humorous language, claims that the *gratia* the *vir* can gain among men is more important than an exclusive relationship with a woman. According to Sedgwick, who also relies heavily upon Lévi-Strauss' theory of exchange, the fate of women is "caught up in male homosocial exchange" (16). These male-male relations, whether considered hom(m)osexual or homosocial, are the support structure of a patriarchal society. In order to address the position of the *puella* and her place in the *Amores*, we must consider the network of male-male relations that are transacted through her.

*Amores* 2.19 shows the *amator* making a direct address to his rival, who is in this case the *puella's vir*. The *vir* is an undeveloped character who is discussed in terms of his relations to others instead of his personality. The *amator* demonstrates the perverse necessity for the *vir* to play the role of the elegiac rival by giving him explicit instructions for his rivalrous conduct. The ease of the *amator's* conquest is unacceptable because the *vir* is not providing enough resistance. An elegiac lover cannot accept easy love:

*ferreus est, si quis quod sinit alter amat*<sup>37</sup> (4). Ovid is expanding upon the theme used by Tibullus in 1.6, in which the *vir* has not prevented Delia from acquiring a third rival. This earlier elegy also features a direct address to a belittled rival, and advice on the proper way for the *vir* to participate in a triangle:

at tu, fallacis coniunx incaute puellae,  
me quoque seruato, peccet ut illa nihil,  
neu iuuenes celebret multo sermone caueto  
neue cubet laxo pectus aperta sinu<sup>38</sup> (15-18)

In both poems, the pursued woman is too easily attainable; if the *amator* desired her body alone, he would have no objection. The *amator* is seeking a very specific kind of resistance. Ovid's *amator* also addresses the woman he pursues, informing her of the tactics his Corinna had used to create obstacles to her attainment, in keeping with his precept: *si qua volet regnare diu., deludat amantem*<sup>39</sup> (33). The new *puella* should employ such tactics as well, but these will not be enough to satisfy the *amator*'s needs. Even if his *puella* is already playing hard to get, her current boyfriend has a role to play as well.

The *amator* once again makes a direct address to his rival in order to give him instructions on his place in the game. In addition to setting up physical impediments, the *vir* ought to experience certain emotions (as did Tibullus' *vir* in 1.6.21): *mordeat ista tuas aliquando cura medullas*<sup>40</sup> (*Am.* 2.19.43). For the relationship, which is already beginning to resemble a transaction, to proceed fruitfully, both men must be fully

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<sup>37</sup> Anyone who loves what another man allows is made of iron.

<sup>38</sup> But you, incautious partner of a deceitful girl, watch for me also, that she should not sin. Beware that he neither frequent young men with much talk, nor recline with her breast uncovered by loosened garments.

<sup>39</sup> If any woman wishes to reign for long, let her deceive her lover.

<sup>40</sup> Let this care sometimes bite at your marrows.

immersed and invested in their positions. The *amator* emphasizes again that he cannot continue to desire the girl unless his rival attempts to prevent their meetings. He continues to use a humorous tone, but delivers a serious statement about the operation of his ideal relationship: *iamque ego praemoneo: nisi tu seruire puellam / incipis, incipiet desinere esse mea*<sup>41</sup> (47-48). The *amator* openly states that it is up to the *vir* to ensure that he retains the *amator* as a rival. He explains that this rivalry is something that he has often hoped for (49), and he fears that the *vir*'s refusal to play the right role will destroy the relation between the *amator* and the girl: *at mihi concessi finis amoris erit*<sup>42</sup> (52). Here we can clearly see the importance of the rivalrous relationship to the amorous relationship: each set of relations is required to uphold the erotic triangle, as discussed by Girard. The lover concludes the elegy wishing that he will someday fear revenge, and decrying *viri* who allow themselves to be deceived too easily. As mentioned above, he emphasizes that his relationship with the girl must be forbidden in order for his relationship with the man to be desirable.

Why would the *amator* hold so many, and such emphatic, desires regarding his relationship with his rival? Irigaray reminds us that "The exchanges upon which patriarchal societies are based take place exclusively among men. Women, signs, commodities, and currency always pass from one man to another" (192). It is these relations between men that control and shape any patriarchal culture, and which are therefore of extreme importance to the men involved. Since women are objects of exchange, they cannot control relationships or value within their societies. Irigaray infers that sociocultural systems that deny active participation to women require

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<sup>41</sup> I warn you now: unless you begin to guard your girlfriend, she will begin to cease being mine.

<sup>42</sup> But your permission will be the end of my love.



hom(m)osexuality to maintain themselves. Therefore, the value of any woman rests on her ability to create relations and benefits among men (172) This is especially true of the prostitute, who is not removed from circulation after her initial exchange: because she remains exchangeable after her use, she represents continual possibility for creating male-male relations.

When this theory is applied to the *Amores*, we can better understand the lack of emphasis on the desired woman, and the intense focus on the actions of the other men with whom the *amator* comes into contact. The *puella* serves as a means of cementing contact between men in various ways: sometimes for their material gain, sometimes to reinforce desired identities, sometimes to perpetuate a way of life. The money given by one man to a woman will ultimately benefit the other men it will enable her to service. The *amator* does in fact recommend that his *puella* gather wealth from her rich suitors so that she can be available to him, ideally for free:

nec tamen indignum est a divite praemia posci  
munera poscenti quod dare possit habet;  
carpite de plenis pendentes uitibus uuas,  
praebeat Alcinoi poma benignus ager<sup>43</sup> (1.10.53-56)

The patronage of each man will allow the amatory pursuits of the others to continue uninterrupted.

The *amator* has more than economic goals at stake: he wants the rival to indulge his appetite for play. Irigaray's conception of hom(m)osexuality, a social relation possible only among men, allows the possibility of playful relations. Hom(m)osexuality can be maintained in "speculations, mirror games, identifications, and more or less

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<sup>43</sup> It is not, however, shameful to demand a price from a rich man. He has gifts that he is able to give to you when you ask. Pluck the hanging grapes from full vines, let the kind field of Alcinous offer its fruit.

rivalrous appropriations, which defer its real practice" (172). Hom(m)osexuality is never actualized in the *Amores* because it is deferred by sexual desire for women, but it remains as a powerful societal force that shapes the possibilities for the *amator's* relations with any *puella*. The *amator* is highly aware of his close relation to his rival, and he expresses a desire to regulate its operation. Because women are repositories of male value rather than innately valuable actors, the *amator* must establish his status and worth in relation to other men, whether directly or through an exchanged female. If the man who currently holds social control over a woman is not enabling her to stand for the proper value that will affirm the desires of the *amator*, the *amator* must approach his rival directly.

Irigaray's discussion of women as Marxist commodities informs us that "Woman's price is not determined by the 'properties' of her body — although her body constitutes the *material* support of that price" (175). While the *amator* appears to be pursuing the girl's body (in 3.11.38 he tries to fix her as just that: *auersor morum crimina, corpus amo*<sup>44</sup>), the body represents a value determined by transactions among men. Through their contact with the *puella*, the *amator* and his rival are drawn into a hom(m)osexual relationship that regulates their behavior and benefits their positions within the male-male amatory economy.

The *amator* makes the importance of this hom(m)osexual relationship more clear in 3.4, which serves as a reversal to his own dilemma in 2.19 and to Tibullus' concerns in 1.6. Instead of dealing with a *vir* who sets too little guard over his mistress, the *amator* has encountered a *vir* who guards his *puella* too closely. When he cautions the *vir*:

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<sup>44</sup> I reject the sin of her ways; I love her body.

*desine, crede mihi, uitia irritare vetando*<sup>45</sup> (11), he demonstrates the attraction generated by obstacles to desire. However, this *vir* has taken the advice from 2.19.37-44 to an unworkable level, and threatens to shut down the elegiac sexual economy by removing the *puella* from exchange. The *amator* firmly reminds him that by strictly restraining his mistress, he is actually encouraging her to cheat on him: *nitimur in uetitum semper cupimusque negata*<sup>46</sup> (3.4.17). The risk of infidelity is increased not only by the enticing nature of obstacles to the lover, but also by the high value this kind of behavior places upon the *puella*. The *amator* seems to be aware of the effect that a man's regard for a woman has on the erotic economy in which he is involved. His evaluation of the *puella* is perfectly in line with Irigaray's formula for establishing female worth: women, who are innately interchangeable, become more valuable as they manifest the male labor expended in their production. The *amator* identifies this repository of male labor in the *puella*:

*nec facie placet illa sua, sed amore mariti;  
nescioquid, quod te ceperit, esse putant*<sup>47</sup> (3.4.27-8).

The actions of the *vir* are translated into value in the body of the *puella*. She becomes a medium for communication from one man to other men, and as such a guarantor of quality. Her person is less responsible for attracting suitors than is the man who has demonstrated interest in her.

Because the interest of one man increases the desire of others, the *vir*'s rivals are attracted by the *vir* himself, and he creates the network of rivalry from which he seeks to

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<sup>45</sup> Cease, I beg you, to provoke vice by forbidding it.

<sup>46</sup> We always labor for what is forbidden, and we desire what is denied.

<sup>47</sup> That woman is pleasing not because of her beauty, but because of the love of her "husband." They believe there is something that captivated you.

withdraw himself. The following couplet of 3.4 shows that the desire of the rivals is brought about by the actions of the *vir*:

non proba fit, quam uir seruat, sed adultera cara:  
ipse timor pretium corpore maius habet<sup>48</sup> (29-30).

The rival's fear of the *vir* becomes the primary attraction in the courtship, and the *amator* plainly presents the *vir* as an integral part of the pursuit of sexual pleasure. The necessity of the *vir*'s involvement in the love affair of any rival is stressed in the final couplet of this passage:

indignere licet, iuuat inconcessa uoluptas;  
sola placet, 'timeo!' dicere si qua potest<sup>49</sup> (31-2)

The *amator*'s seemingly absurd construction of the functionality of an affair brings many subtle operations into high visibility. The *puella* becomes a commodity of externally defined value; as Irigaray reminds us, "commodities, women, are a mirror of value of and for man" (177). In the world of the *amator*, a woman cannot maintain the interest of a man without the interaction of other men, who form an economically hom(m)osexual network.

The *amator* also expresses the sentiment, familiar from Propertius 2.13, that a woman's desirability can be the result of her ability to affirm the worth of his poetry. While he can excuse a woman who doesn't care for poetry, her appreciation of his work is singled out as a strong motivation of his attraction:

est quae Callimachi prae nostris rustica dicat  
carmina: cui placeo, protinus ipsa placet<sup>50</sup> (2.4.19-20)

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<sup>48</sup> The woman whom her partner guards does not become honest, but rather a beloved mistress. Fear itself has a greater worth than her body.

<sup>49</sup> You are allowed to be resentful - forbidden pleasures bring delight. She is only pleasing when she can say "I am afraid."

The desirability of the *puella's* flattery illustrates the importance of a woman's ability to mirror the worth of the man who desires her.

The actions of men may even take the place of the initial attraction to the woman's body, as in the case of rivals who seek out a *puella* because they have heard of the *vir's* interest in her. In poems like *Am.* 3.11-12 and *Prop.* 2.34, the woman functions less as an object and more as an empty signifier or place holder for a relationship that is transacted through her, independent of her identity. The *puella* is difficult to define in regard to any male gaze, because the male focus may be more closely related to the other men around her. According to Irigaray, "The economy of exchange - of desire - is man's business. For two reasons: the exchange takes place between masculine subjects, and it requires a plus-value added to the body of the commodity, a supplement which gives it valuable form" (177). In 3.4.1-32, the supplement is the rival's fear of the *vir*; as the *amator* says, this is a more important determinant of the woman's attractiveness than any beauty of her own.

Lines 37-48 of 3.4 show a different kind of masculine value that a *puella* can carry. The *amator* claims: *rusticus est nimium, quem laedit adultera coniunx* (37). A man who is not willing to take on rivals is not fit to play the game of love, which has now been specifically defined as an urban occupation. The *amator* is as particular in his choice of rivals as he is of his female conquests. In light of Irigaray's discussion of masculine economy, the *amator's* demands for a sufficiently urbane rival are well justified. Sexual relations do not operate independently of the economic and political atmosphere, so the *amator* seeks a relationship in which all the players are willing to

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<sup>50</sup> A girl calls the poems of Callimachus rustic before mine - I am immediately pleased by one who is pleased by me.

function by the social requirements of city life. The ways in which the relationships between the desired woman and the male rivals benefit a man of the city are detailed in the final passage of the poem. This intentionally humorous passage also exemplifies the woman's function as a conduit of male exchange:

si sapis, indulge dominae uultusque seueros  
exue nec rigidi iura tuere viri  
et cole quos dederit (multos dabit) uxor amicos:  
gratia sic minimo magna labore uenit;  
sic poteris iuuenum conuiuia semper inire  
et, quae non dederis, multa uidere domi<sup>51</sup> (43-8).

As discussed above, the *puella* is a valuable asset because she is able to bring the *vir* both relationships with other men and various forms of *gratia* within the politics of male-male exchange. The benefits of participating in a hom(m)osexual economy appear here in material form: food, gifts, and whatever other advantages new friendships may bring. Because city life depends heavily on connections between men, the urban rivalry functions as a way to bring men of similar social status together. Two rivals may not intentionally attempt to aid one another, but in a city made up of many networks of men, these relations perform important indirect functions as the men circulate money and goods. When the *amator* tells the *vir* to change his habits and allow his *puella* to bring him rivals, he is supporting this network of hom(m)osexual commerce.

Sedgwick, discussing the work of Girard, affirms that "in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced,

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<sup>51</sup> If you are wise, indulge your mistress, and put away your grave face, and do not defend the rights of a stern husband, and cherish what friends your wife will give you (and she will give many). Thus great *gratia* [favor/influence/popularity, a kind of social capital among men] comes with little work. Thus you will always be able to attend the banquets of young men, and you will see at your home many gifts which you did not give.

are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent" (21). In *Amores* 3.4, the *amator's* bond to the *puella* is entirely conditional on the bond of his rival to the *puella* and on his rival's actions regulating that bond. Similarly, in 2.19, the *amator* makes it clear that he will abandon his relationship with the *puella* if her *vir* doesn't act in the proper way to restrict the *amator's* advances (2.19.47-8). The bond between the *amator* and his rival in these poems is clearly as powerful as his relationship with the woman he pursues, because he is willing to leave her behind if his rival behaves incorrectly. Sedgwick's discussion of Lévi-Strauss explains this situation effectively as one in which "normative man uses a woman as a 'conduit of a relationship' in which the true *partner* is a man" (26). While the woman plays an important role in the text of the *Amores*, relations with her are often subordinate to the *amator's* relations with his rival.

On the metatextual level, the poet's relation to the *puella* is also frequently subordinate to his relationships to other poets or groups of poets. Like the work of Tibullus and Propertius, the *Amores* often display a rivalrous interaction with the more serious genres of epic and tragedy. Ovid's *amator* shows his struggles with the supposed social pressure to move on to weightier themes by mythological examples (1.1), personification of the genres (3.1), and, most important to the argument of this paper, by using amorous rivals as representatives of opposing poetic genres. The process of characterizing the lover in opposition to the *dives amator* or *miles* (3.8) is a parallel construction to the process of defining elegy in opposition to epic. The *amator's* defense of his seclusion and devotion to amorous pursuits operates both on the level of illustrating his profession within his poetry and of defending his choice to create this poetry.

The *amator* gives a defense of elegy in the opening poem of each book of the

*Amores*. His justification for elegiac composition is always set out in a rivalrous situation: epic and tragedy prove unsuitable to the task that Cupid has commanded him to undertake. The role of the writer and the lover are closely linked when he explains his need to reject the genres characterized by *gravitas*:

quid mihi profuerit velox cantatus Achilles?  
quid pro me Atrides alter et alter agent,  
quique tot errando quot bello perdidit annos,  
raptus et Haemoniis flebilis Hector equis?  
at facie tenerae laudata saepe puellae  
ad vatem, pretium carminis, ipsa venit<sup>52</sup>. (2.1.29-34)

The *amator* defines his career by his refusal to treat epic themes, instead embracing the *levitas* of elegy. It is through his departure from the stories of Hector and Achilles that he becomes an effective charmer of women. His decision to forsake epic themes extends to his enthusiastic embrace of a leisurely life, which he defends by personifying the dominant male tradition in the form of the dull and brutish *vir*, *dives amator*, or *miles*. When he begs his *puella*'s door to open to him in 1.6, the *amator* is sure to set himself apart from other callers: *non ego militibus uenio comitatus et armis: / solus eram, si non saeuus adesset Amor*<sup>53</sup> (33-4).

In 1.9 the *amator* alters his technique to show elegiac love as a more sophisticated form of warfare that is suited to an urbane poet. He is different than a *miles* who courts a *puella*, because he has taken up a style of combat that marks him as a member of the educated elite. The *amator*'s technique will allow him to overcome his more militant

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<sup>52</sup> What will it profit me to have sung about swift Achilles? What will either of the sons of Atreus, or the one who lost as many years by wandering as by war, or mourned Hector, dragged by the Haemonian horses, do for me? But a tender girl, when her beauty is has been praised, often comes to the poet herself as the reward of his songs.

<sup>53</sup> I do not come accompanied by soldiers or weapons. I would have been alone, if fierce love was not present.



rivals as if they were enemies in combat:

mittitur infestos alter speculator in hostes,  
in riuale oculos alter, ut hoste, tenet.  
ille graues urbes, hic durae limen amicae  
obsidet; hic portas frangit, at ille fores<sup>54</sup> (17-20).

Even while the *amator* defines himself as a *miles amoris*, he sets himself up as a rival to the epic hero who is more concerned with *urbes* than *limina*, and *portae* than *fores*. In this elegiac warfare, the *puella* operates not only as the conduit for establishing a partnership with a textual rival, as in the pattern explored by Sedgwick, but also as a conduit for relation to historical literary rivals.

The use of the female character as a channel for male interest is also found in the personified conflict between Elegy and Tragedy in 3.1. Each figure represents a male-authored genre and stands for the desire for different kinds of power within the male-male economy: Tragedy for glory, sobriety, and respectable social standing (15-30), and Elegy for pleasure, access to sex, and pursuit of leisure (35-60). The personifications demonstrate both the external valuation of the female exchange object, as well as the central rivalry between *gravitas* and *levitas* that the poet continually confronts in his poetic composition and in his social conduct. In order to pursue amorous relations, the poet has (at least temporarily) given up access to the privileges offered by epic composition. He frequently validates this decision by showing his ability to triumph over a *militaris* rival, either by successfully winning the girl's favor, by subverting the military language of epic to serve as elegiac persuasion, or by presenting his rival to the audience as a coarse and unworthy opponent. The latter strategy is employed in cases where the

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<sup>54</sup> That one [the soldier] is sent as a spy to hostile enemies. The other [he lover] keeps his eyes on his rival as his enemy. That one besieges great cities, this one besieges the threshold of a harsh girl. This one breaks doors, that one gates.

rival cannot be dispatched by the persuasion of elegy. When the *amator's* opponent is able to control access to the *puella*, the poet must rely on his ability to attack his rival's morals and profession, which I will consider in the following chapter. The temporary success of a rival grants substantial benefit to the *amator* as well by allowing him to reaffirm his position through the opposition of *gravis* and *levis* poetry, personified by the poet and the *miles*.

## CHAPTER 4:

### Complications in Rivalry: Jealousy, Violence, and Resignation

The necessary relations of rivalry between the men in the *Amores* are complicated by the appearance of sexual jealousy, the violence it can lead to, and the *amator's* occasional desire to forfeit the game in the face of overwhelming obstacles. When a rivalry is challenging for the *amator* to control or regulate, he must choose his actions carefully to maintain his place in the amorous economy. Because violence against another man could harm the poet's social standing, the frustration created by his jealousy can result in a desire to punish the *puella* instead (e.g.: *Am.* 2.5.45). This redirection of aggression is interesting because of the openness of the *amator's* admission that he shares the guilt in his *puella's* acquisition of rival lovers (3.11-12). Whether or not he succeeds at maintaining access to the desired woman, the *amator* is always careful to characterize his rivals as dull-witted or unrefined men whose interest in prestige, money, and military exploits allows him to define himself and his elegiac pursuits as contrasting foils.<sup>55</sup>

The *amator's* relationship to his rival becomes more troubled in 3.8, when he encounters a rival whose social position and conduct is entirely unsuited to his desires. Like the *amator* of Tibullus in 1.5, and of Propertius in 1.8 and 2.16, he uses this opportunity to characterize himself in opposition to the rival. He does not address his rival directly in this poem, but berates his girlfriend for her poor choice. The *vir* in question is a *dives amator* and a *miles*, to whom the *amator* generically objects:

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<sup>55</sup> See James 2003:104 on the characterization of the *vir* as a stupid and uninteresting man. She also points out that the elegiac rival is consistently genericized as "nothing special."

omnia possideant; illis Campusque forumque  
seruiat, hi pacem crudaque bella gerant;  
tantum ne nostros auidi liceantur amores  
et (satis est) aliquid pauperis esse sinant<sup>56</sup> (*Am.* 3.8.57-60)

The campus and the forum are two zones of action that are forfeited by the writers of elegy; by situating this *vir* among them, the *amator* stresses his incompatibility with the elegiac world. This rejection of military rivals is familiar from Tibullus 2.3, in which the *amator* declares that any man who would stupidly prefer war and riches to the pursuit of love is iron-hearted and not suitable for his *puella* (65-6). Ovid's *amator* also makes it clear that this man has won the *puella* by money alone, and that his money originated both from physical labor and from violence: *possidet inuentas sanguine miles opes*<sup>57</sup> (54). The *miles* has upset the bonds of rivalry and transaction among men by directly buying what he wanted with blood-money and shutting down the access of other men to the woman he is supporting. This *vir* did not participate in the game of begging and waiting and negotiating: enough cash bought him what he wanted quickly and without competition.

The *amator* reacts very differently to this man than to his rivals in 2.19 and 3.4. In 3.8, the *amator* openly displays sexual jealousy towards his rival. He imagines the intimate relations shared by the *vir* and the *puella*, and breaks the man down into body parts alongside those of the woman, just as he did while constructing his fantasy about the *vir* in 1.4.35-37. He refers to the *miles*' embrace, his head, his *latus*<sup>58</sup>, and his hands

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<sup>56</sup> Let them have everything, let the Campus and forum be slaves to them, these govern peace and bloody war. Only let the greedy not be allowed to have our loves, and let them permit something (it is enough) for the poor .

<sup>57</sup> The soldier possesses wealth he gained by blood.

<sup>58</sup> While it literally means his "side," *latus* has a sexual connotation in elegy.

(12-17). He focuses especially on the *miles*' right hand: *dextra tange - cruenta fuit. / qua periit aliquis, potes hanc contingere dextram*<sup>59</sup> (16-17). His emphasis on the contact between body parts demonstrates his envy, which increases his need to portray his rival as monstrous. Although he expresses hostility toward the *miles*, he does not confront him or make any threats. He reserves his anger for the *puella*, blaming her for the disruption of the erotic male economy. As in Propertius 2.16.16, the *puella* is at fault for allowing herself to be won by the rival's riches.

In 2.19 and 3.4, the *amator* uses veiled or humorous threats when addressing his rivals: if they do not comply, they will lose their place in the network of hom(m)osexual relations. In 2.19.56 he asks: *nil facies, cur te iure perisse velim*<sup>60</sup>? If the *vir* were to obstruct the *amator*'s access to the woman, the *amator* would go only so far as the sense of *velle* in retribution. No violence is attempted towards the elegiac rival. In 3.8, instead of planning to harm the *miles*, he wishes:

o si neglecti quisquam deus ultor amantis  
tam male quaesitas puluere mutet opes<sup>61</sup> (65-66).

If any retribution will take place, it will be a divine action against the rival's wealth, rather than his person. The *amator* comes closest to acting against his rival 1.4, when he tells the *puella*:

oscula si dederis, fiam manifestus amator  
et dicam 'mea sunt' iniciamque manum<sup>62</sup> (39-40).

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<sup>59</sup> Touch his right hand - it is bloody. Can you touch that right hand by which someone has died?

<sup>60</sup> Will you do nothing that will make me justly wish you to die?

<sup>61</sup> Oh if only there were some avenging god for the neglected lover who would change such wickedly sought riches to dust.

<sup>62</sup> If you give him kisses, I will become an acknowledged lover, and I will say "those are mine," and reach out my hand.

He claims that he will intervene and take the *puella* from his rival, but does not imply an attack on the *vir*. The *Amores* do not include any outbreaks of physical violence between male rivals, no matter how passionate their involvement with the elegiac *puella*.

The second half of the *Amores'* third book shows an increasing tendency to place the blame for the rivalry upon the woman (or women). This translation of aggression is easily accomplished once a woman has assumed her function as the conduit of male relations. The rival is approachable through the form of the woman because of her transparency: "concrete forms (of women), their specific qualities, and all the possibilities of 'real' relations with them or among them are reduced to their common character as products of man's labor and desire" (Irigaray 181). The *puella* in 3.8 is a product of her contact with the *miles*: as he touches her, she becomes describable as the woman touched by him:

hunc potes amplecti formosis, uita, lacertis?  
huius in amplexu, uita, iacere potes<sup>63</sup> (11-12).

The *amator*, by uncharacteristically interjecting the Propertian endearment *vita*, tries to reclaim the *puella* as his own, but because of her position as one willing to bear the *amplexus* of such a man, she carries a new value of exchange. As the repository of the *miles'* desire, she can be approached as the party at fault: *hos fassas tangis, avara, manus*<sup>64</sup> (22). In the following lines, her *avaritia* makes her a living metaphor for the descent into the iron age. Notably, the *miles* is another *durus vir* who causes the *puella* to fear to take on another lover: *in me timet illa maritum* (63); however, the *amator* no

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<sup>63</sup> Can you, my life, embrace this one with your beautiful arms? Are you able, my life, to lie in his embrace?

<sup>64</sup> Greedy girl, do you touch hands that admit such acts?

longer addresses his rival as the one in need of change. He regards the *miles* with jealousy and the *puella* with contempt.

In her discussion of sexual jealousy and violence, Toril Moi emphasizes this transference of aggression from the rival to the love object. She explains that while women are more likely to attack their rivals, men tend to blame the contested woman for any infidelity - either way, a woman receives the blame (62). When the *amator* expresses sexual jealousy in 3.8, it is the *puella* who is the object of his verbal abuse. The *amator* often wishes misfortune to befall his girlfriend for her actions, and in 1.7 he demonstrates that he is capable of using physical force against a woman who has offended him. Moi explains that "One of the main reasons for the more frequent male feelings of aggression against the partner is... social, linked to the fact that women are considered the property of men" (64). She agrees with Irigaray that "women [are] pieces of merchandise circulated among men, who by giving (and selling) women to each other express their mutual love" (64). If conduct toward a woman functions as an expression of a man's desires towards another man, then the words of the jealous *amator* can be read as a conversation with his rival, in addition to an objectification of the *puella*. She is once again a conduit for facilitation of male hom(m)osexual relations. By criticizing her fear, the *amator* communicates his frustration to the unsuitable rival.

The violence taken against women in elegy is usually physically mild, and is frequently accomplished through verbal means, including threats, intimidation, and slander. In the work of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid, the objective of this violence is to ensure the *puella's* cooperation in her prescribed role in the elegiac world, rather than to

exact revenge: direct violence is consistently criticized.<sup>65</sup> Minor property destruction and threats are recommended instead. The most commonly advised method of keeping the *puella* under control is by tearing her garment (Tib. 1.10, Prop. 2.15, Am. 1.5,7).<sup>66</sup> Substantial damage is also possible as a result of the threats made by the poets to defame the women with whom they are involved. Ovid's threat to reveal the extent of his relations with Cypassis in 2.9 could lead to her physical endangerment. Propertius' publication of the insult, *Cynthia forma potens, Cynthia verba levis*,<sup>67</sup> is designed to create a rumor that will always follow her and do her harm (2.5.27-30). When Ovid's *amator* feels threatened by a new rival in 2.5, and his jealousy is aroused by watching their passionate contact and kisses, he reserves all his anger for the *puella*. As he watches them sneak tongue kisses at a banquet, he feels a desire to harm her:

sicut erant (et erant culti) laniare capillos  
et fuit in teneras impetus ire genas<sup>68</sup> (45-6).

Because he cannot inflict any punishment upon his rival, the *amator* instead desires to punish the *puella* for their shared actions. As in the passages listed above, the violence he imagines is aimed at social control rather than painful retribution.

This method of transferring frustration continues in the remaining poems of the third book. Poem 3.11 shows the *amator*'s weariness with enduring jealousy and rivalry and his attempt to put an end to his relationship. The *amator* cannot, of course, withdraw from love: to do so would jeopardize his place in the male-male economy that

<sup>65</sup> See Tib 1.10.59-60, Prop. 2.5.19-26, Am. 1.7.1-6

<sup>66</sup> In *Ars* 2.169-184, Ovid gives a more lengthy explanation of the dangers of violence against the *puella* — any damage could result in financial penalties.

<sup>67</sup> Cynthia, great beauty; Cynthia, faithless in words.

<sup>68</sup> I went to tear her hair (and it was well groomed) and to attack her tender cheeks.



determines his social standing, as well as his position as a poet. The necessity of complications in love to the composition of his poetry demonstrates another circulation of economic value among men: even if a rival prevents the *amator* from achieving physical satisfaction, he supplies him with the *materia* necessary for his occupation. The *amator's* inability to withdraw from rivalrous love, that is, from relations with other men transacted through female bodies, underscores Irigaray's contention that homosexual relations form the basis of the patriarchal economy: "Heterosexuality is nothing but the assignment of economic roles: there are producer subjects and agents of exchange (male) on one hand, productive earth and commodities (female) on the other" (192). The *puella* is an economic extension of his relationship to the various rivals and men with whom his affairs bring him into contact.

The part of love that has wearied the *amator* is precisely the *puella's* interactions with his rivals. As he makes clear in 3.11b, her physical form is wholly unobjectionable, and is unimportant to his feelings of discontent. The unpleasant experiences of his relationship are once again assigned to the fault of the *puella*:

ergo ego sustinui, foribus tam saepe repulsus,  
 ingenuum dura ponere corpus humo?  
 ergo ego nescio cui, quem tu complexa tenebas,  
 excubui clausam seruus ut ante domum?<sup>69</sup> (9-12).

She alone causes him to endure rejection and slave-like vigil outside her closed doors. As in Tibullus 1.6.6, the rival is totally effaced in these couplets as *nescio cui*. The action, and therefore blame, is transferred to the *puella*, whose involvement with the unknown rival is characterized by the active *tenebas*. The *amator* no longer acknowledges the

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<sup>69</sup> Have I, so often repulsed from your doors, endured to lay my body down, as a freeborn man, on the hard ground? Have I, for some man you held in your embrace, slept out of doors as a slave before your locked-up home?

agency of the rival, because the woman has become a transparent medium for displaying his actions and desires. When the *amator* does see the rival himself, he expresses no desire for retaliation or violence, only shame of being seen by the rival:

hoc tamen est leuius, quam quod sum uisus ab illo:  
eueniat nostris hostibus ille pudor<sup>70</sup> (15-16)

The *amator's* use of the word *hostibus* is of interest because it draws attention to the distinction between a rival and an enemy. The man leaving the house, weary from love, is not himself a *hostis*. Enmity may spring from an impediment to the economic interests of the *amator*, but the rival is a necessary member of the *amator's* productive network.

The *amator's* description of the successful rival in 3.11 bears similarity to his treatment of the *miles* in 3.8 insofar as it stresses the involvement of the man's body:

vidi, cum foribus lassus prodiret amator  
inualidum referens emeritumque latus<sup>71</sup> (13-14).

When he looks at his rival, he sees telling traces of his recent activities, and the man's condition is clearly expressive of the relations that the poet himself desires with his *puella*. The *amator* regards his rival jealously, noting the man's weariness and the sexually suggestive weakness of his body. The evident satisfaction of the rival is frustrating to the *amator*, but serves to emphasize the *puellae's* desirability to men. He reacts to his jealousy with shame, as he has visibly failed to gain access to the *puella*, while other men have succeeded.

The expression of shame, as internalized or self-reflexive jealousy, could be regarded as a Freudian "defence against homosexuality" in its overt presentation (216). According to Freud, refusal of rivalry constitutes an acceptance of homosexuality and

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<sup>70</sup> This, however, is slighter than that I was seen by him — may that shame befall my enemies.

<sup>71</sup> I saw the weary lover come forth from your doors, bearing his weak and worn-out side.

inability to overcome the oedipal rivalry, "for the renunciation of women means that all rivalry with [another man] (or with men who may take his place) is avoided" (219). In Moi's reading of Freud, jealousy is caused by the libidinal energy that the subject must use to repress overt homosexual desire (57). Irigaray claims that overt homosexuality (referring to a man's sexual choice of male partners to the exclusion of female partners) must be forbidden by the patriarchy: "Because [homosexual men] openly interpret the law according to which society operates, they threaten in fact to shift the horizon of that law. Besides, they challenge the nature, status, and 'exogamic' necessity of the product of exchange" (193). Overt homosexuality, the refusal of female partners, must be censured because it threatens the sociocultural order that defines men as producers and women as commodities. Open expression of sexual jealousy provides an unusually clear view of the recognition of male desire in the body of another man: the rival has achieved the *amator's* goal and is therefore a model of the *amator's* fulfilled desire. Rivalry must continue in order to ensure the active participation of men in the struggle for desirable women, which "accompanies and stimulates exchanges of other 'wealth' among groups of men" (Irigaray 172). This exchanged wealth may include the gifts at the end of 2.19, as well as the *materia* that will enable the production of elegy.

The *amator* comments on the influence of the male-male relations that are transacted through the *puella* when he describes his former place by the *puella's* side:

scilicet et populo per me comitata placebas:  
causa fuit multis noster amoris amor<sup>72</sup> (3.11.19-20)

This couplet succinctly describes the hom(m)osexual economy that underlies the whole

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<sup>72</sup> Of course you were pleasing to the people because you were accompanied by me. My love for you was the cause of the love of many for you.

of the *Amores*: a man desires what other men desire. The *multis amoris* caused by *noster amor* offer substantial benefit to the poet as well as to the *puella*. The *amator's* own desire has created rivalries in the same way that the desire of the *viri* for his *puellae* in 2.19 and 3.4 influenced the *amator's* pursuit. In the next couplet, the *amator* again blames the *puella* and her *mendacia* for his situation, allowing only a brief confession of his participation in the creation of rivalries (21-22). The *puella* is of course in no position to terminate the rivalries that her contact with the *amator* will perpetuate. When the *amator* yields again to love, and therefore to the support of the male-male economy, he says of the *puella*: *quidquid eris, mea semper eris*<sup>73</sup> (49). The woman is reinstated as a commodity in the hom(m)osexual economy; therefore, she will continue to circulate among men, forging male-male bonds. The *amator* is working within a cycle motivated and maintained by envy, jealousy, and male desire: His poetry creates desire in his readers, and the actions of his readers cause him to experience jealousy. The obstacle introduced by the new rivals he has created adds interest to his relationship with the *puella*, impelling, and in fact enabling him to create more poetry that will perpetuate this cyclical economy of desire.

The *amator* fully accepts the necessity of his interaction with rivals in 3.14. He no longer disparages his *puella* for her lying, and he no longer commands her to cease taking other lovers. He concedes:

quae facis, haec facito; tantum fecisse negato,  
nec pudeat coram verba modesta loqui<sup>74</sup> (15-16).

The *amator* is willing accept the inevitability of the presence of rivals, and as long as the

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<sup>73</sup> Whatever you may be, you will always be mine.

<sup>74</sup> Do what you are doing, only say that you did not, and don't be ashamed to speak modest words publicly.

signs of their actions are not made too clear, he will tolerate them. What he wishes to avoid instead is sexual jealousy and the feelings of inferiority that often accompany it.

He asks the *puella*:

cur totiens uideo mitti recipique tabellas?  
cur pressus prior est interiorque torus?  
cur plus quam somno turbatos esse capillos  
collaque conspicio dentis habere notam?<sup>75</sup> (31-34).

The physical marks of love provoke a profound sexual jealousy in the *amator* that could result in retribution or violence. The *amator* is evidently in emotional distress, characteristic of jealousy: *mens abit et morior, quotiens peccasse fateris*<sup>76</sup> (37). The mark of a rival's tooth on the neck of his *puella* is a more sexually charged image than that of a rival leaving the house in the morning, and is harder for the *amator* to accept.

Propertius's *amator* also recognizes the power of sexual jealousy for creating turmoil between rivals. When he expresses his desire, *in morso aequales videant mea vulnera collo*<sup>77</sup>, he is creating the situation most likely to evoke a violent reaction from his jealous rivals (3.8.21). Propertius's *amator* is less concerned than Ovid's with the maintenance of a shared relationship; rivalry is necessary to him for the creation of elegiac episodes, but his ostensible desire in the larger part of his work is for full and exclusive possession of Cynthia. His wish to incite potentially violent jealousy demonstrates a lower level of concern with maintaining a stable triangle of desire. Ovid's *amator*, in contrast, is less likely to bring violence against his rival (as in Prop. 3.8.33), and instead to attempt to regulate his rivalries and work out his frustrations against the

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<sup>75</sup> Why do I see so many tablets sent and received? Why that the bed has been pressed here and there? Why do I see your hair disheveled by more than sleep, and your neck marked by a tooth?

<sup>76</sup> My reason departs and I die whenever you confess to have cheated.

<sup>77</sup> Let my rivals see my wounds on my bitten neck.

*puella*.

Moi explains that the violence a man inflicts on his female partner is provoked by his desire for complete ownership (64). If the *amator* acts on this desire and successfully prevents his rivals from gaining access to his girlfriend, he will be in the position of the *vir* in 3.4, who lost the benefits of the male-male economy to which his *puella* would have connected him. The *amator* in 3.14 does not attempt to separate himself from this economy. In fact, he takes steps to ensure that his *puella* will not encourage him to attempt to such a separation. He states that: *falli muneris instar erit*<sup>78</sup> (42). It is part of his duty in his social position to tolerate rivals, and therefore to allow his *puella* to deceive him so that his sexual jealousy will not threaten these relations. He finally tells his girlfriend: *iudice uince tuo*<sup>79</sup> (50). He is ready to be conquered and will allow himself to be deceived whenever necessary.

The *amator*'s movement from anxious solicitation of his rivals to weary acceptance of his girlfriend's engagements with other men shows his recognition of the importance of the homosexual economy that governs the practice of urban love. Sexual rivalries are unavoidable and should be tolerated, as he tells the *vir* of 3.4: *obsequio vinces aptius illa tuo*<sup>80</sup> (12). As early as 2.19, the *amator* encourages the creation of obstacles as a way to incite passion: *sic mihi durat amor longosque adolescit in annos*<sup>81</sup> (23). Behind the titillation of the games that rivalry evokes is the structure of a society based on male-male exchange, in which women function as a means of "putting men in

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<sup>78</sup> To be deceived will be the form of my duty.

<sup>79</sup> Conquer by means of your judge.

<sup>80</sup> You will succeed more ably by your compliance.

<sup>81</sup> Thus my love grows strongly and endures the long years.

touch with each other, in relations among themselves" (Irigaray189). These relations among men produce the social *gratia*, economic benefit, and elegiac *materia* to support the culture of the men of the *Amores*.

## CONCLUSION

Rivalry between men is a prominent feature in all of Roman elegy. It creates obstacles, forges bonds, and reveals hidden motivations behind the *amatores'* passion for their *puellae*. Tibullus and Propertius appear to avoid rivalries and to desire exclusive possession of the *puella*, but both celebrate competition at several points in their poetry. Tibullus introduces the disputes and obstacles brought about by rivalry as essential elegiac themes in 1.1.73-4. In 3.8, Propertius tells Cynthia that he always desires to fight with her and with his rivals for her. While the earlier elegists usually claim to seek peaceful and private relationships with their girlfriends, they rely on the characters of other men to maintain their reputations as superior lovers. Ovid develops this theme more overtly in the *Amores* when he clearly expresses his need for a rival in 2.19.

Ellen Greene suggests that Ovid's explicit subversion of elegiac themes shows his desire to expose the exploitation of women that was common in Roman society (349). Whether or not this was Ovid's intention, the *Amores'* open presentation of the relationship between male rivals allows us to examine the function of the women who are passed between them. French feminist constructions of erotic economies are especially useful tools for comparatively interpreting these relationships, because they present detailed models of male-male exchange. The *puella* can be explored in comparison to Irigaray's description of the prostitute as a woman who becomes more valuable with increased use because she can continually bring men into relation with one another. Unlike the Roman matron, who is exchanged only a handful of times, the *puella* spends



much of her life moving through the exchange relationships described by Irigaray. Her body becomes the location of the male-male bonds by which masculine value is determined.

The worth of men in the *Amores* is established comparatively. The *amator's* rivals appear as the characters of the *vir*, *dives amator*, or *miles* from Roman comedy, and serve as intellectually inferior foils to his elegiac persona. These characters are necessary in order to establish the *amator's* worth by opposition. The rivals often serve the additional function of embodying certain qualities valued in epic poetry. When a *puella* prefers the *amator* to a wealthy or noble suitor, the *amator* can prove the worth of the elegiac profession he represents in contrast to the epic values suggested by the *miles*. The poet further emphasizes this theme by incorporating imagery of war and conquest to describe courtship and sexual relations — the language of epic, such as the *arma* from *Aeneid* 1.1 that appear in *Am.* 1.9, is valuable to the *amator* because it belongs to another author and another genre. By recreating these themes in elegiac situations, the poet claims them as his own and attempts to prove the worth of his poetry in relation to epic.

The rivals that allow the *amator* to characterize himself by means of contrast become more interesting to him than the *puella*. As he nears the end of his collection, conflicts with rivals become more frequent, and the *amator* spends much of his time trying to explore and control his relationships to other men. In 3.4 and 3.8 he is disturbed by the conduct of a rival whom he describes as his inferior. In 3.11, he tries to come to terms with his standing in relation to the other men who have obtained access to the *puella*. While he addresses much of this poem to the woman, his concern lies with how her rejection of him in favor of other men affects his relative value in the exchange

economy. The *puella*, like Irigaray's commodified woman, is attractive in the male-male economy because she can represent the worth of the men who participate in her exchange.

The more the *puella* circulates among the men in the *Amores*, the less visible she becomes. When the *amator* faces an increasing number of rivals, his attention is drawn from the *puella* to these other men. As poetic *materia*, and as an object of desire, the *puella* is valued for her ability to create relations between men and to allow men to maintain these relations through contact with her body. The men of the *Amores* participate in a hom(m)osexual economy of desire in which amorous transactions occur between men and are transacted through women. What makes the *puella* desirable is the desire and labor invested in her by other men. The *amator* and his rivals are linked more closely to one another than to the *puella*: she is a mediator of male-male desire, power, status, and rivalry.

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